

THIRTY SERMONS
TO BOYS & GIRLS.

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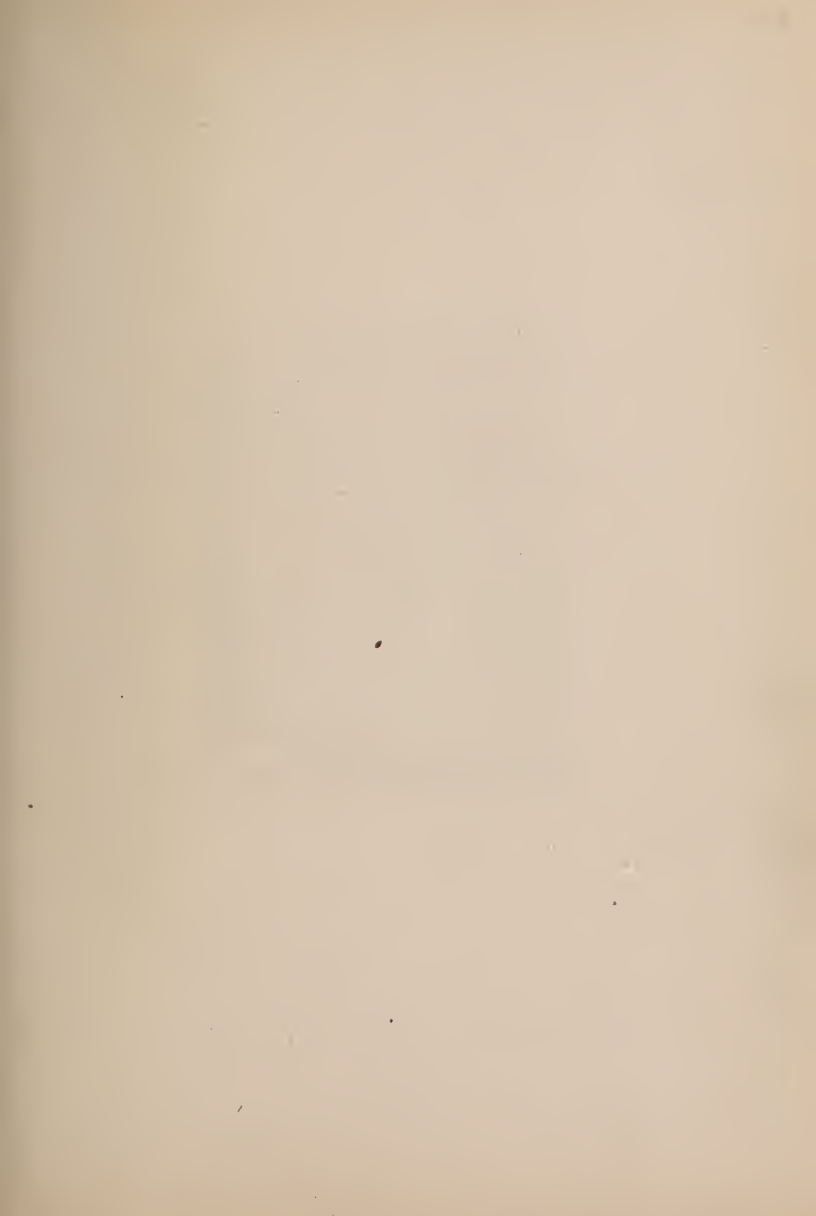
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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.







CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH,

DAVENPORT, IOWA.

THIRTY SERMONS
TO THE
BOYS AND GIRLS
OF THE
CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH,
DAVENPORT, IOWA.

17
1062
By their Pastor, J. G. M.

James G. Merrill

no. 1743210

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1879.

TO
The Mother
OF
THREE BOYS AND TWO GIRLS,
THIS LITTLE VOLUME
IS DEDICATED BY HER OLDEST SON.

"Her children arise up and call her blessed."

PREFACE.

The welcome given to a little volume of children's sermons, published two years ago, has induced their author to print a new series of similar discourses, under the title of "Sermons to Boys and Girls," a name which in his preaching he has come to give them.

That a large number of the younger ministers of the United States have adopted this plan of preaching a short sermon every Sunday to the young, affords substantial reason for hoping that the question is being solved, "How can the boys and girls be induced to attend church?"

If this little book aids in solving this question, if it makes any boys and girls become better men and women, or assists parents in rearing their children for the kingdom, its author's highest wishes will be met.

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SERMONS FOR BOYS AND GIRLS.

FOUR KINDS OF BOYS AND GIRLS.

Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment, and some men they follow after. Likewise also the good works of some are manifest beforehand, and they that are otherwise cannot be hid.—I. TIM. V., 24, 25.

Timothy was the minister of the Church at Ephesus. There were some of the officers of the Church whom he had to watch very closely, and might have to rebuke. In order to do this, he would need to understand human nature well, and hence in the two verses which I have read he is told how different different kinds of men are—a fact that others beside him need to know.

I remember when I went to college with my younger brother, soon after we got there, the president sent for us to come and see him. He talked to us quite a little while, but the only thing that I recall of what he said was, "Be

careful in the choice of your friends; you will do well to summer and winter a man before you become his fast friend." And that is one of the lessons of your text, that it takes time to find out what another person is; and boys and girls would get on better in life if they would remember this.

Once in a while you see a boy whom at first you suppose to be bad; he is not good looking, his manners are not good; he has a brusque way, and when you come to know him better you find that you are not mistaken. The more you learn about him, the worse you find him to be. He is a bad boy in the fourth grade, and when he gets into the fifth the teachers and scholars cannot help having heard that he was troublesome and ugly, and all are sorry to see him. He is one of those of whom your text speaks when it says, "Some men's sins are open beforehand."

On the other hand, I have known of a little girl moving into a neighborhood, and in the course of a day or two a child who has always lived there comes running home from school quite out of breath, and hardly waits to be polite to her mother before she cries out, "Oh!

there is such a nice girl moved into 843! She has such beautiful eyes and hair, and wears a great many nice new gowns; she is just splendid. Are n't you glad that I am going to have such a playmate?" Mother does not say much. But after a while she finds that her little girl is not as good as she used to be; does not mind as quickly, or speak the truth, and uses coarse words. She wonders at it. She doesn't think it can be because she goes so much with the new little neighbor, for she appears like a little lady; but at length, by keeping close watch with eye and ear, she finds that the little miss is one of those who appear very nicely, but who, as the text says, "have their sins coming after them."

But there is a better side to all this, as we shall see in the last part of your text, where it says the good works of some are manifest beforehand; by which it means that some children cannot help showing that they are good. Their faces tell the story to everybody whom they meet. When they come into the school-room the teacher looks at them, and says, "They will never give me any trouble, I know; what nice faces they have; how good their man-

ners are. They must have a careful mother at home, and a father whom they love and obey." And yet the teacher waits a while to see if she has made a mistake; and when, after several weeks have gone by, and the children have had their lessons well, and have kept all the rules of the school, and have been well-behaved on the playground, then she is glad to feel that there are some bright, true faces, which have just as bright and true hearts behind them.

But once in a while there is another kind of boys and girls. They are like gems that have been hid among the rubbish; but if they are real gems they will be found out, for your text says such cannot be hid. And have you not found children that are sometimes ragged, overgrown, awkward boys, who turn out to be the brightest scholars? and some little fellow who is very quiet, and who you think has no spirit, showing himself braver and more courageous than some of the larger and noisier boys? Some of the very greatest men and women of America, when they were children, were not thought to be much.

So you see, children, there are four kinds of

people in the world — those who look wicked, and are so; those who appear good, and are not so; those who have good faces, and hearts to match; and those who are good inside, but it takes time to find them out.

You must therefore be very careful about your companions, and try not to judge them wrongly, nor to let them cheat you. And be careful all the while to remember that we all should avoid the bad, and cleave to those who are good.

KEEP OUT OF BAD COMPANY!

From such withdraw yourself.—I. TIM., VI., 5.

This rule, given to Timothy, is just the rule that Jehoshaphat, of whom your to-day's Bible lesson teaches, did not obey. He was a good and wise man in the main — pious, gentle, just, with a good mind and a strong body. But he lacked firmness, could not say "no." He went on a visit to a wicked king, and while there was persuaded to unite his army with the army of King Ahab. They went into battle; his fellow king was killed, and he himself hardly escaped with his life. When he returned home, God's prophet met him, and said, "Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? Therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord."

The same lesson is taught in the first Psalm. You remember what it says: "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." Paul said,

in another place beside the text, "Mark evil men, and avoid them," and in another place still gave the same advice : "Note them, and have no company with them."

And I have, in my short lifetime, seen many a boy, who has turned out badly simply because he associated with bad boys, and could n't say "no."

But the world is full of boys and girls who are wicked. They go to public school and to private schools, and some of them to Sunday school, and you may not know how to withdraw from them.

1st. You need not be uncivil toward the very worst boy or girl that you know. If they say "good morning," you should make a polite answer. Some one rebuked George Washington for being polite to a colored man who had touched his hat to him. He replied that he was not going to have a negro outdo him in politeness. We can be polite, and yet not be friendly.

2d. You need not feel unkindly toward those who are wicked. You should not wish them harm. You ought to be very glad if they learn to be good and become better.

3d. You cannot safely make such children your friends. If one of your playmates swears, you will, if you have him for a fast companion or friend, be almost as sure to become profane as you would to catch the mumps or measles or whooping cough if he should have any of these diseases. And the same is true of any other bad habit; they are all catching, and very few of us can be much with those who have them without catching them.

The only safe way is to keep just as far as possible from any companions who would do you harm; for, as that psalm says, after you walk awhile with bad company, then you come to want to stand by worse company, and at last you sit down and make yourself at home with the very worst. It is then very difficult to get away from them. You will be safer to keep outside of a rut, rather than to trust to your good luck to get out after once you are in.

There never was a boy yet who got into trouble from bad companions, who had any expectation that he could be persuaded to do what he came to do. The way to keep from taking the last step which means ruin, is, never

to take the first one; and the moment you are persuaded that the boy or girl who wants to be your friend tells lies, swears, cheats in marbles, speaks unclean words, leave off associating with him.

4th. But Jehoshaphat got into trouble worse and worse, because he joined hands with his wicked friend in carrying on his pet schemes. Now, it may have been all right for the kings of your Sunday-school lesson to make war against a common enemy, but it was wrong for a good king to become the ally of a bad one. And I am quite sure that the way in which bad boys and girls will try and lead you Christian boys and girls along will be by getting you to be with them in doing something that is all right in itself. They will know enough not to ask you to do anything that is mean and wicked, but will want you to go with them into something that very likely your father and mother will approve.

But you will do well to remember that God is not willing that we should help those who, while we are helping them, will do all they can to keep us from living the good and the true.

A dog, on a time, went visiting his cousin the fox, a thing that the older dogs had often told him not to do. He found his cousin very glad to see him, and accepted his invitation to go out and hunt some chickens for supper. While on the way the fox talked very wisely about chickens being good to eat, and looked so very handsome that the little dog was very proud of his company. All this time the fox was intending to steal his supper. They came to the farmyard, whence he had stolen many a chicken before. But this time they fell into the trap that the farmer had set, and the dog, too late, learned that he should withdraw from such company.

THE BRAND ON THE CONSCIENCE.

“ Their conscience seared with a hot iron.”—I. TIM., IV., 2.

In the time of the war, when the government of the United States had bought a drove of horses, a man with an iron instrument, which, after being heated, would burn through the hair and skin, used in this way to mark all the animals with the two letters U and S, and after that everybody knew that the government owned them.

This is called putting on a brand, and is the same thing which the Apostle meant in your text when he wrote about a conscience seared by a hot iron. So you see I am to talk about a brand on the conscience.

(1) *Who puts on this brand?* It is Satan, who wants in this way to make sure of all whom he can catch by his wiles. He wants to have everybody know that there is a world full of people belonging to him.

(2) *He tries his best to put a brand upon*

the children. He knows that a brand grows as people grow. You have seen, perhaps, a scar on my little finger. It came from a cut that I made with a sickle twenty-two years ago. It was not as long then as it is now, but, as my finger grew longer, the scar grew longer. I have seen a tree with a great mark upon its side, and have learned that when the tree was young some one had cut off a limb or made a gash through the bark.

(3) *Satan knows that it is hard for a man with a brand to rub it out; often it is impossible.* Cain thought it was dreadful when he had to go through the world with a mark upon his forehead by which all who met him would know that he was a murderer. What would he have given if he could only have made his forehead smooth again? I had a teacher once who I noticed always tried to hide his hand, on which there was a dreadful scar, made by a fight in which he was engaged when a wild boy in college. I have seen men who have tried to make the whiskers grow over an ugly mark on the face by which all could tell that they had been mean or wicked. There are some men who

have been willing to tear a large piece out of their flesh to get rid of a scar which, every time they saw it, would tell over a story that they would be only too glad to forget.

(4) But it is of more importance than all I have told you, to learn how Satan puts the brand upon the children's consciences. I will tell you a few of the ways.

He tempts one of you to tell a lie. You tell it, and then there is a mark upon your conscience which says to you: I belong to Satan, for I have lied, and he is the father of lies. He tempts a boy to swear, and then, if he swears, a brand is put upon that boy's conscience. Everybody who heard the oath could say, That is Satan's mark. He tries to persuade another boy to neglect becoming a Christian, to say "no" when a kind friend asks him to be a follower of Jesus, and another mark is made which binds him to the Evil One.

And another thing which you all ought to remember: when the brand has been put on, it is harder to do right than before. When you have made one blot on your copybook, it is much more easy to make a second, and then more

easy a third, and so on. When you have had one tardy mark at school, you do not care half as much for the second as you did for the first. In the same way a child that has begun to tell lies, to swear, to leave off praying, going to Sunday school or church, finds it more and more easy to do that which, before he had done it once, he would not have thought he could ever have done at all.

But there is another thought. It is that, although Satan may have put his brand upon you, Jesus stands ready and waiting to take you back and put His mark upon you. And, although you may have to wear the scar that Satan's brand made, it will not keep Jesus from loving you as long as you are trying to love Him. He has prepared a robe that will cover the scar on your conscience, and He will put His mark upon your forehead. But what would you give if you could be rid of the scar while you have His mark.

A long time ago I heard the story of a boy who was so bad that his father had to try every way to correct him. At last he told his son that for every bad act he should drive a nail in his



room. Soon the room was full of nails. His father said: "Now, my boy, for each good thing you will do I will pull out a nail." The boy tried very hard, and at last all the nails were pulled out. The father said: "Ar n't you glad to see the last nail out?"

"But," said the boy, "the holes tell the story of my bad life."

Boys and girls, be careful that Satan does not brand you!

PAUL A BOY.

When I was a child I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child.—I. COR., XIII., 11.

If we did not have Paul's word for it, it would be very hard for us to believe that he was a genuine boy, such a boy as some whom we see in Davenport. But the grand Apostle, who could argue like the best of lawyers; could preach like the best of ministers; could go through shipwreck like the bravest of sailors; could be whipped nearly to death rather than do wrong; who, as we think of him, had the keenest of eyes, shaggy eyebrows, firm lip—a stern looking man—said: "When I was a child I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child."

Paul, then, was a real boy, not a little old man in boy's clothes, nor one who liked girls' plays; but full of life and innocent fun, such a boy as you would like to have come and spend the vacation with you. Let us take a look at him when he was about ten years old, with his curly

black hair and black eyes. His mother calls him; he starts right away, but instead of walking he has to turn two or three summersaults, leap a fence or two; but for all these antics he is by her side quicker than any grown person could have gone over the distance that he went. She gives him an errand to do; he hears every word, and, as soon as she is through, off he goes to do as she bade. Whistling the liveliest tune that he knows, he does the errand promptly, but we conclude that he has met Judah and Benjamin, and Moses and David, who, not very long after he reaches home, are there also. With mother's leave, they have a game at hide-and-seek, and Paul runs the fastest and hides the most wisely of them all. Then they try leap-frog and other games. By-and-by they quiet themselves, so as to get cooled, for Paul has proposed to the rest to go in swimming in the Tigris river, the water of which is very cold. When they are cool, they all go to Paul's mother and ask if they can go in swimming. She sees that they are not too warm, tells them they must not stay in too long, and off they go in a hurry to have such a swim as children only can have. At the right

time Paul is home; has done the work that belongs to him; has said his prayers and gone to bed; and no sooner is he in bed than he falls asleep, even before his mother has had time to come in and kiss her boy good-night; but for all that she looks at her sleeping son, brushes the hair off his forehead, and then, kneeling down by the bed, asks God to bless her boy; and, as she does it, she thinks over all her boy's days, full of life and sport, and believes that he will grow up into a strong, good man.

But it was not all vacation days for Paul. He went to school most of the time; and, as he sat on the floor, with the rest of the scholars and the teacher, sometimes his back would ache, and he would wish that he could go out of doors and into the fields; but he did not think much about it, for Paul was a good scholar, and stood at the head of his class; and his father had told him that if he made good use of his time he should have a chance of going to the best school that the land could afford.

And yet when school was out Paul was ready for all the play that he could crowd into the time that was given him. I wish that we could have

seen him in the games that he played; when he prepared a place where the boys could run a race, and had them all at another time fire their slings, or use their bows and arrows; especially in their contests with slings, for all his ancestors were familiar in using the sling; and there was nothing that pleased Paul more than to hear his father read in the Bible how, long, long before he was born, his great-great-great-grandfathers could sling at a hair and not miss.

But with all his love for fun and sport, Paul never did a mean thing; he never would cheat or lie in his games, swear, or use any filthy words, or do anything that he would have been ashamed to have his mother know. He always took the part of those who were in trouble; and, so long as he was thus noble and true, his father and mother were wise in letting him be a real boy while he was a boy, for in that way he would be a true man when he came to be a man.

KING JOSIAH.

“Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned in Jerusalem one and thirty years.”—II. CHRON., xxxiv., 1.

There are, I suppose, ten or fifteen children here this morning who are not far from eight years old. They are about four feet tall, weigh between fifty and sixty-five pounds, wear jackets or short dresses — a happy set of children. Now, if one of these boys should have a gold crown on his head, and wear a rich robe instead of a jacket, and carry a handsome sceptre in his hand, he would perhaps look like Josiah, King of Judah, who was king when he was eight years old. But, although having the crown and the robe could not make you a real king, you can be something better than king by being a good child, as was Josiah, of whom the Bible says: “He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and turned neither to the right hand nor to the left.”

There have been other child kings — Joash at

seven years; Henry III. and Edward VI. of England at nine; Louis XIII. of France at nine, and Charles X. at ten, and others; but of all these it could not be said that they did right. And I am afraid that it could not be said of all the children here, about this age, that they do right.

It must have kept Josiah from having many a good time to have been king so young. He had to have great cares, and must have been a sober little fellow all the time, and I have no doubt but that you are happier than he was, and, if only you are as good, would have no wish to change places with him.

There are, I think, not far from fifteen persons in this house to-day who are sixteen years old; they are most of them over five feet tall, weigh over one hundred pounds, have fresh, bright faces, and perhaps some of the boys would do to stand beside Josiah, of whom your Sabbath-school lesson says: "In the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the Lord" — that is, he began to inquire what he could do for the Lord. And I am very glad to know that almost all of you who are

sixteen have made up your minds that you will be Christians, and are trying to be true Christians. But, more than that, when you are sixteen it is about time to make up your mind what you are going to do for Christ; whether you will be a Christian teacher, or storekeeper, or carpenter, or bookkeeper, or minister. You cannot tell much before sixteen what you can do. I know a little boy who thought when he was three years old that he would like to sell grapes; when he was four, that he would make a street-car driver; when he was seven, that he would be a preacher; but when he gets to be sixteen he can tell better what he is good for, and, although he may not even then be able to tell just what he can do best, he can make up his mind to do all he can to serve God.

And one thing you who are sixteen can learn from the youthful king: You can get advice and help from those who are older and wiser than you. I know that most young folks think they know all that it is necessary to know. They make a great mistake. Josiah had a great many good men to ask advice of—the high priest, his minister, the secretary of state, who could tell

him how to act as king; the mayor of the city, who could help him in looking after the town; and a good woman by the name of Huldah, who would tell him of the future, for she was a prophetess. And any of you sixteen-years-old boys and girls can be sure that if you are well-behaved, trying to do the right thing, that the men and women whom you know will be very glad to do all they can to make men and women of you; and any of you who would come to me and ask me what I thought you were best fitted to do, would learn that I would take all the pains I could to tell you.

But I am going to talk to some who are older, to-day, as though they were children — to the young men and women of twenty. Let me see how you look. Most of you are as tall as you ever will be. The young men have, some of them, beards, and look as though they were equal to any work; the young women are the pride of the houses they live in, and some of them, although too young to do it, are thinking of houses of their own. Let us see what Josiah was doing at that age. "In the twelfth year of his reign he began to purge Judah of its idola-

try." How I wish that I had twenty young men and women of this stamp! At the age of twenty ready to settle down to the real business of life, to take a place in prayer-meeting, to carry an unflinching piety into the schoolroom, behind the counter, to the desk. If there were twenty such young people in this church, caring, first of all, to be hearty, earnest Christians, I should be the happiest man in Davenport.

Children, if you want to have it said of you at last, "He did right in the sight of the Lord, turning neither to the right or the left," you must, like the boy king, do right when you are eight, when you are sixteen, and when you are twenty; and there will be but little danger but that you will keep on from that time to the end, doing right.

NO HARM IN BEING YOUNG.

“Let no man despise thy youth.”—I. TIM., iv., 12.

The man who received the letter in which these words were written was about thirty-eight years old at the time, not very young, to be sure, but much younger than many members of the church of which he was pastor. But as Paul had told Pastor Timothy to talk pretty plainly to some of the members of the church who had been behaving badly, he tells him to behave himself in such a way that no one could think of saying, You are too young to advise or command us. And I think it will not do any of us harm to learn that we can be worth so much that our age will be nothing against us.

There are some boys and girls who imagine that people do not think enough of them. I know one who had not gotten through two years in a city high school, who would not work with his hands, although he needed the money that hard work would bring; and all the while he

was complaining that he was not appreciated in his ambition to be a lawyer and was dreaming of the time when, as a lawyer, he could have men take off their hats to him. But all of us, who are older than such a boy, know that he will never make a lawyer, or anything other of a man, so long as he has such notions in his head; and he will not only be despised when young, but when he is old.

Here is another boy who wants to get an education. He is poor, but during the summer he will work in the fields from sunrise to school time, and in the winter no work is beneath him that he can do to earn all he can for the family; and although he has to be seen once in a while with rough work-clothes on, and while at work his hands and face are dirty, he is honored, and will be so long as he has such a spirit, no matter what his age may be.

There are so many young people who appear to think that the way to be respected is to ape those who are older, and, even though they ape their follies, it makes them feel as though they had become men and women by the means.

I have seen boys who appeared to think that

if only they could smoke a cigar it would be the making of them; that no one after that could look down on them. I have known some others who would go to the druggists and buy something to make whiskers grow on their smooth faces; and some girls appear to feel that they would be more respected if their dresses were only longer, or their cloaks more after the pattern of their mothers'. And, worse than these foolish notions, I have seen some boys, and a very few girls, who were willing to be wicked that people might think that they were old enough to amount to something. They will swear and tell that which they know is not true.

Now, any of you who imagine that any such methods as these will keep men from despising you, are making a great mistake. All sensible and good people will be disgusted at such actions, and, what is more, even bad people despise any one who tries so hard to be bad.

The secret of not being despised, and hence of being honored, is in being so thoroughly worthy that all will gladly honor and respect you, and the more the younger you are.

Don't you know that there is a little fellow down town who works hard all the week, and when Saturday night comes carries all his wages to his mother? and not a week passes, as he faithfully performs his work, without some one saying, "What a manly boy that is !" and I don't believe he is five feet tall, and no one ever saw him strut to try to be taller than he is. But all boys are not like him. There are too many who have learned to like whisky, and how to bet and swear; and everybody, whose opinion is worth anything, says, "What foolish young chaps those are."

The fact is, that the only thing which you should fear is, lest you should do that which ought to be despised, not that you will be despised because you are young. And, if you happen to live in a town where the people have fallen into wicked ways, and where those who are mean are honored, remember that the praise of fools is not worth the getting, and that your text does not say let not fools despise you, nor silly men nor women, but let no man, no true man, no one whose opinion is worth anything, despise you. And you may be quite sure that

you will be honored so long as you respect yourselves and do that which will please God. For, as the wise man has said, "He that followeth after righteousness findeth honor."

WHAT SHORT BOYS AND GIRLS SHOULD DO.

And he could not, because he was little of stature.—LUKE, XIX., 3.

When I was a boy I had but very few books. Children's books were not plenty then. But there was one book which I owned so long ago that I cannot tell when it was given to me, and that book I could almost say by heart. It had pictures in it that seemed to me very beautiful, and verses that I thought exceeding fine. Your Sunday-School lesson to-day has reminded me of one of these pictures, and this was the verse that went with it:

“Zaccheus, he
Did climb a tree,
His Lord to see.”

And your text tells why Zaccheus climbed the tree. It was because he was short. Now, you boys and girls are short, and if, like Zaccheus, you want to see Jesus, you may have to climb higher than you now are.

There are no trees that will help you, but I

can tell you some other ways to see the Lord. One way is to climb into father's or mother's arms. Once in a while you are in a great crowd; you want to see the noted man whom all the rest are looking at. You cannot see anything but men's coats and women's dresses. You might as well be at home. Papa sees you are in trouble, reaches down, takes you in his arms; your head is as high as anybody's, and you can see all that there is to see.

So if any of you want to see Jesus, that is, to know more about him, just take hold of father's hand and tell him what you want, and he will take you up at once, and let you see all that he can see. And there is even a better place than that; many of you have climbed there often; it is upon your mother's knee; and, as you sat there and heard her talk about Jesus, you have learned to love the Saviour.

Another place to climb is beside your Sunday-School teacher. A Sunday-School teacher, like any other teacher, is some one who has gone a little longer or farther in the way up to knowledge than the scholar. Learning anything is like climbing up a hill, it takes hard

work. I think it must have been hard for Zaccheus to have climbed the tree.

To see Jesus now-a-days we all have to climb above many things that please us, we have to get above many wrong habits. This takes hard work. Your teacher will be glad to help you.

In my old home, in New England, I used to like nothing much better than the day when teachers and scholars went into the woods. These were on the mountain and hill sides, and now and then we would come to a steep ledge of rocks, higher than my head. I should have been unable to go any farther had not the teacher reached down his hand and helped me up, and he seemed just as glad to do it for me as I was to have him do it. And you may be sure that if you want any help in finding Jesus, no one will be more glad to help you than is your Sunday-School teacher, the very one who has prayed this morning that you might want to be led nearer to Jesus.

Another way to climb to a place where you can see Jesus, is to follow your minister. The best name that a minister can have is pastor,

and that word means one who feeds others, generally sheep or lambs; and, if your minister is a true pastor, he is doing all he can to lead you to the Great Shepherd. I said you must follow him, for he is trying to lead you, not to drive you. And you all know that your pastor loves his flock, and especially does he love the lambs, you little ones that are so lively and happy; and he wants to have you come at last into the safe fold where Jesus is.

Do you think there is anything that could please a shepherd more, when he is climbing up toward the fold, and trying to make all the flock follow, than to have one of the little lambs walk very near him, and seem to be glad to get along as fast as he could? As long as I am your pastor, children, I hope that you will find, by following me, you will climb nearer to Jesus.

But there is something better than father, mother, teacher, or minister, to help you to see Jesus, it is Jesus himself.

Don't you remember how little children were brought one day to the Lord? And he put his hands on them, and blessed them, and

hav n't you often seen pictures of the children sitting on His knee? And do you not think they could see Jesus then better than Zaccheus could from the tree? They could look right into his eyes, and could hear every word he said, as he told them, "Suffer little children to come unto me."

STRIVE TO ENTER IN AT THE STRAIT GATE.

“Strive to enter in at the strait gate.”—LUKE xiii, 24.

I had a vision, and in my dream I was on a very large island. There were mountains, rivers, plains and meadows, towns and cities, and it was filled with all kinds of people, young and old, rich and poor. It seemed to me a beautiful place to live in, on the morning that I first saw it, and the people who first spoke to me were very polite and kind. I thought that I would like to make my home there, and stay forever in such a place.

But it was not long before I learned that there were many unpleasant things about the island. In the first place it was very certain that at no very distant day the island was to be destroyed by a huge volcano or burning mountain; then, too, I learned that the air was bad, that no one could live there more than one hundred years, and most died very much short of that age, and after

that no one saw them, although it was commonly supposed that they, very many of them, went to a far off land where wickedness and sorrow abound, it seemed to me therefore a very sad thing that I had come to such a place, for so far as I could at first learn, there seemed to be only two things possible to do, to stay on the island until it was destroyed, or by dying be taken to a place vastly worse.

But while I was thinking over this, I heard a man talking very earnestly to a few people who had gathered about him. I went near and heard him say, "My friends, you need not remain here and be destroyed on the island, nor need you go to the awful land to which so many from this place have gone, and where they must always stay in sadness and gloom. On yonder mainland is a beautiful castle with grounds about it larger by far than a thousand such islands as this. In that delightful abode all are perfectly happy, and are to be happy forever. And to-day I have come to tell you that the owner of the palace has built a bridge from your island to the mainland, and wants to have

all the people who will cross over it and be safe. Are there any of you who will go with me to the beautiful land?"

It seemed to me that I could hardly wait until he was through talking that I might give my name to the company which he was trying to form, who were to start at once for the palace of the king. And you may be sure that I was very much surprised to find that I was almost the only one of those who heard him speak, who was ready to go. And very soon I found the reason, for in talking to the man who had been speaking, he said, "you know, I suppose, that we cannot cross the bridge to-day; that we must wait for a messenger from the king, who will call us to his palace; and, meanwhile, you must go with me into a narrow path that leads to the bridge, and very likely you will find it hard work to walk in the narrow way."

"But, surely," said I, "it is good sense to walk in this way, however hard it may be, if only at last it brings me to the bridge, and by that to the palace of the king."

"You are quite right," said the man, "and I

will take you at once to the narrow gate which stands at the head of the narrow way."

I came to the gate and found that it was indeed a very narrow one. It was very plain to be seen when once it was found, and I am quite sure that any, however small or ignorant, could have found it if they only had tried, while most people who are busy or careless, thinking about something else, would I am quite sure fail to see it and pass it by. It was very, very short, so that all but children had to stoop to enter it, and it seemed to me that it ought to have been short, for to stoop is only one way of showing that we are humble, and surely all the people on the island had reason enough to be ashamed, to be humble, on account of the wrong things they had done. Then it was only a little space between the posts, large enough to let any man in by himself, but too narrow by far to admit a great many who were not willing to go in unless they could take great bags of gold, great trunks of fine clothes, while some seemed to think that the gate and the way and the bridge ought to have been wide enough to

let in the house they lived in and all their other property. But as the man told me, when they came to the bridge they would find that they could not take a step upon it unless they left every single thing behind them, so that the king made it a rule to have the gate and the way just like the bridge, narrow, just wide enough for one to walk alone.

I watched to see who went through the gate and along the way, and I found that they were the best men and women that could be found on the island; they were kind in their faces and gentle in their words; they had money to give to those who needed it, and help to all who asked for it.

There were some, a great many, who pretended to be walking in the way and expected to go across the bridge, who had not gone through the gate. They really thought more of the nice houses on the island than of the palace; more of being called great and good than of really being good. They will feel very, very badly, when the prince shall say: "I never knew you."

But one thing pleased me very greatly. I saw that there were many children who easily went through the gate, and grew strong and great and good as they walked in the way, and when they were called to the palace the sound of their welcome came over the sea that lay between.

ALMOST AND ALTOGETHER.

“Almost and altogether.”—ACTS, xxvi, 29.

These words begin alike, but how differently they end! And now that you children are on one or the other of these roads at the head of which one or the other of these words stands, I want you all to be of those who have left the *almost*, and become the *altogether*.

There are some things in respect of which you should not be either almost or altogether. You would not like to have anybody say of you, “He is altogether cruel, untruthful, or mean.” Neither would you want to have it said that you were almost a thief, or a coward, or a sneak.

But in our text both the words point in the right direction. The trouble is, however, that one is not wholly right. Go down to the depot some day, and you will see between Brady and Perry streets a man whose business it is to pull a lever or switch, and thus keep the trains on

the right tracks. Here comes the train from the West, the Overland Pacific Express. The man has the switch altogether right, and the engine, with its splendid coaches, marches grandly into the depot. But suppose he is satisfied with having his work almost right, the engine can't be stopped until it has run into a sleeping-car that stands upon a side track, and two men are killed, because the switch-tender was almost, not altogether, right.

Here are two men who are expecting to be chosen mayor of the city. They both have a great many friends, and votes enough are promised so that each hopes to have the office; but when the day comes, a friend of one of the men forgets to vote until five minutes too late, so that his friend is an almost mayor, not altogether one. And he will tell you that there is a very great difference between the two.

You are trying to get a hundred every day in school; you get along nicely several days, but at last your seat-mate gets you to playing, you fail to learn one lesson, and you have to become almost, instead of altogether, a perfect scholar.

Now, what is true of the school boy, of the man who wants to be mayor, and of the train, is true in the case of those who are going toward Heaven, the almost Christian and the altogether Christian children.

They both go to church and prayer-meeting; they both are obedient to their parents, and kind to their mothers and sisters; they both are good scholars, truthful, honest, well-behaved, gentlemanly and lady-like.

But one of them has done as God asked, given Him his heart; the other has not; and that makes them altogether different.

A few years ago over on the Island were two men, both tall, broad-shouldered, strong, fine looking; both were brave, truthful, honest; both had wives and beautiful children whom they loved; both appeared to be gentlemen; but one thing will tell you what they are, try it! Send the flag up on the staff, and let the red, white and blue stream in the wind! "How beautiful it is!" So thinks and says one of the men, and how proud he is of the blue uniform he wears. The other turns his back upon the flag; he hates it; he is a traitor. And much as we may

think of him otherwise, when we call to mind that he is a traitor, he is all wrong.

So any of you children who do not give to God your hearts; that is, do not choose Him as the one who is to guide your lives, you are disobedient, you are traitors! It takes but a very little thing to make a very great difference in your lives. A freezing boy will freeze just as surely just outside the door, if he does not get across the threshold, as he would out on the prairie. A drowning child will drown just as surely within a foot of the shore, if he cannot reach land, as if he were in the middle of the river.

We all of us, then, must be very careful not to be satisfied with almost, and should rest only when we know what it is to be altogether a Christian.

Remember that you can only be altogether a Christian when you have made up your mind that you will trust in Jesus Christ as your precious Savior; a little step, but it decides the question whether you are all right or all wrong.

THE RIGHT TIME.

"In due time."—I. TIM., ii, 6.

There is an old saying that there is a place for everything, and everything should be in its place. And there ought to be a saying that there is a time for everything, and everything should be in its time. And any one who reads the Bible carefully, can learn that God does all that He does in just the best time. He makes the sun to rise at the fixed minute, and the moon is never a second behind time; so that there is no danger of collision in the heavens among the stars, as there is on earth upon a railway when trains get out of time.

Now, if God has a due time for everything, you must remember, first, that you can't make up lost time. Once in a while the train comes into Davenport an hour or two late, but that does not prevent any one getting on board to go to Chicago or Boston, because we know the engine can be made to run fast enough to make up

lost time. But that is not the case with us. Every hour of the future has put into it all that any of us can do; and if any boy or girl to-day is not serving the Lord, there will never come a time when he can make it up. All that any of you children leave undone to-day must be left undone forever. For I notice, in the second place, a few things that must be done at the right time or not at all.

When your father or mother take you East, they usually try to arrange the time of their going in such a way that you should see the points of interest along the line. If you go by the Michigan Central, to see Niagara Falls; by the Pennsylvania Central, to go over the mountains by daylight; or by the Erie, to be up over the Susquehanna division, as it is called. Now, if the railroad folks are careless, and let the time go by, you are all disappointed, and lose very much of the profit of your journey. Just so along the line of your life, there are points that you cannot wisely pass. Now, it is very easy for you to learn; commit to memory, as some call it; and there are hundreds of verses in the Bible that are most precious, and some time you would

give a very great deal if you could have them in your mind. You will then have passed the time when you can commit to memory and keep what you learn. In the same way, when you are young is the time to form good, strong habits. Habits are like great bundles of sticks which a man glues together, one each day, for a long time. What a difference there is between that and an equal number of sticks thrown together at one time in a hurry, which is all an old person can do if late in life he begins to serve God.

You all know, children, that there is a right time for baby's first teeth to come; and there is a right time for little children to lose their teeth; and then a right time to go and have the dentist see that they are all right. And as men can't have baby teeth, and if you let your teeth go too long no dentist can save them, so with your minds. There is the best time for you to learn God's truth, and the best time for you to do as He wants you to do; and when that time is gone by, you can do little or nothing of your duty. But there is one thing more to be remembered: that *now* is God's due time for

you to do your duty. You can't change the past. If you scolded your little sister yesterday, you can't now make it out that you did not do it. The hard words were spoken, the little girl felt hurt, and although you may be very sorry and be very kind to-day, it still is true that you were cruel yesterday.

You cannot count on the future. There are perhaps seventy-five young folks who are listening to what I am saying, and I suppose every one of them who has ever had any thought about it expects to do something worth while when he grows up. Is there any one here under eighteen years who can say, I know I shall be twenty-one? No, there is no one in this house who can say, "I know that I shall be alive next Sunday." *Now* is the only time with us, and that is God's due time, or rather it is the time for us to do our duty.

It is each child's duty, as well as each grown person's, to love God, and that we ought to do this very moment.

You would think her a naughty girl, who should say, "I am going to be unkind to mother to-day and to morrow, but Tuesday I mean to

be kind." You would say, *Now* is the time for a good girl to treat her mother kindly.

You know that Jesus wants each one of you to be His friend. He has died so that you might love Him. And every day that you do not love Him, you are treating Him as if you did not care if He did die for you. Now is God's time. It is the due time for you, and me, and all, to give Him all we have, and are, and hope to be.

CHRIST'S AMBASSADORS.

"We are ambassadors for Christ."—II. COR., v, 21.

After the war closed fifteen years ago, there was a company of men who had been fighting against the United States, who made up their minds that they would not live in the United States, but would go off to South America where they would not see the flag that they hated, or have to obey the President whom they could not endure.

They went, but very soon they found that they could not get along without the government of the United States, as well as the United States could get along without them.

Now if one of these men had felt as though he could not stay away any longer, and had gone to Washington and seen the President and told him that he had done wrong, and wanted to become a good citizen of the United States, and the President had said to him, my friend you are forgiven, I am glad to tell you that such arrange-

ments have been made, that I can, without injuring any one, take you back as a citizen of the United States, and you can be treated just as well as if you had never been at war with us. You know that such a man would have been very thankful, and would have told the President so; but you would expect that he would have done more than that, and the first thing that he would have asked, would be, "Mr. President, can I not go back to South America and tell my friends there, that you will forgive them, and that they can have the same treatment, that I have had?" "Certainly," the President would have said, "you can go, and I would be most happy to have you go." That man would then be an ambassador for the President, to the men who needed the help which the President alone could give.

Before the man should have started, he would have received some papers that would have told just how the men in South America should do in order to become citizens of the United States, and he would have to go by those papers in everything. And whatever he said would then have

been just the same as if the President had said it himself.

Now, every true minister is an ambassador, and I am an ambassador to you. I was a rebel against God's government. I did not do at all as He wanted me to. I did not want Him to rule over me. About twenty-five years ago I made up my mind that I would go to my rightful king, Jesus, and tell Him that I would try and be a faithful citizen of His government. I found the King very glad to welcome me back, and that he had made all the arrangements by which I could be taken back; that the King had suffered and died on the cross so that I might be forgiven, and that He had come to life three days after He had been crucified, so that I might have Him to love and serve. Some years after I had learned these things, as I grew older, so that I could tell better what I knew, I made up my mind that I would ask Jesus if He did not want me to go and tell others that they could be forgiven. He told me He did; and for more than thirteen years I have been trying to persuade those whom I have been acquainted with

that they should ask for forgiveness, and become citizens of the kingdom. Many have believed what I have said, and have had their sins pardoned, and are now happy in the service of the King. Most of you children are among this number, but I am afraid that some of you still are serving yourselves instead of serving Him. So to-day I stand here as an ambassador from Jesus, and in His place I ask you to make up your mind to love and serve God.

My King has given me his instructions in this book, and it is written in such a way that I can understand what to do, and can also make you understand it.

There are three principal things that you must do if you would be loyal to Him, that is, would be Christians.

1. You must take Jesus Christ as your Savior, must ask God to forgive you because Jesus has died for you.

2. You must make up your mind to try and do as He wants you to.

3. You must live not for yourself but for others.

These three things done, and, as an ambassador, I am bid tell you that you are forgiven, and by-and-by will go to live with God in heaven.

THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL.

“The glorious gospel of the blessed God.”—I. TIM., i, 2.

Children, your text to-day has seven words, and four of them are the four best words in the English language in the parts of speech to which they belong. Are there anywhere any two better nouns than God and gospel, or two better adjectives than glorious and blessed? The finest mornings of the year and the best news of our lives we call glorious. The highest wish that any of us can have for any one is that they should be blessed. While the word God means the good or the best, and the word gospel, good news or the best news.

And what is more, the man who wrote your text knew what the words mean and used them carefully. Children do not always use words according to their meaning. I have heard a little boy say that his finger pained him awfully when it was only a slight bruise that made the ache. Some girls are all the time calling every-

thing splendid, lovely, horrid, dreadful, as the case may be, hardly thinking what they are saying.

But Paul used his words in a very choice manner, and when he put the seven words of your text together and found use for four such choice ones, he must have had in mind something which we all ought to know about. And I presume you all know what the glorious good news of our blessed God is. It is that God has made a way by which we can one and all obtain eternal life.

The little boy in Africa, when he woke up this morning and saw his father getting ready to kill a poor captive, should he ask his father why he did such a cruel thing, would learn that his father was afraid of a hideous idol in the temple, and to keep on the right side of it, he was going to kill the captive. All the father can think of is his good luck or bad luck in a fight or on the hunt, and his little son has never heard that there is a place beyond this world where all who dwell in it are living true, kind, wise and good.

Now, you children would have been just as

ignorant and life would have been as dark to you as to this little black boy in Africa, had not some one heard the glorious good news which our blessed God told so long ago to men. And there are three things which you ought to do with this text:

First, you ought to believe it. Good news is no better than bad if you don't believe it. If you are living in a very inconvenient house, and father should come home at night and say that next week you all were to move into a large house on the bluff, and you yourself were to have a nice room with new furniture and a carpet just like the one your little playmate has, if you did not believe a word that your father said, you would only be the worse off because he had said what he did. But children generally believe what is told them by their friends, and most of you believe God is your friend. So I will not say anything further about believing, but will say, in the second place, that you should act as though you believed the good news.

Suppose mother had told you yesterday that to-morrow morning you were to take the train

which goes to Chicago, and you were going to visit your grandfather, where you had such a nice time last summer, how early you would go to bed to-night, so that you might wake up in time for the train. Do you suppose a single one of you could sleep so soundly that your mother would have to call you a half dozen times?

Now, God has better news than this. He is telling you all, that if you will try to love and please Jesus Christ, He will take you, when you are ready to go, to be with Him in Heaven. You believe that, and it ought to make you very anxious to be good, so that you may go. But I see some boys in our Sunday School who are more anxious to do what their playmates ask them to than what God desires of them, more afraid of losing a chance to have sport than of doing wrong, and hence they, by their actions, are saying to God, by and by, when I get ready, I will listen to your good news; I want to attend to myself now. If you believed that you could make good wages by becoming a teacher, or a lawyer, or an artist, I think you would all try hard for it, and God thinks that

you ought all to try your very best to get all the good there is in His good news.

One thing more. I have noticed that all kind-hearted people, when they hear any good news, love to tell it. If your teacher should tell you that you were to have a holiday next week, how many would you tell before you got home? Just as many as you would meet, and you would run to meet all you could. If you had a baby brother or sister come to your house, don't you think you would tell your playmates? If you were promoted in school, wouldn't father and mother soon hear of it? So if you believe the good news you will want all others to believe it, and you will tell it; and the best way to tell it is by living kind, pure, true, loving lives, so that all shall know that the glorious gospel of the blessed God is just as good for boys and girls as it was for the Apostle Paul.

THE SINGING ARMY.

“And when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, which were come against Judah, and they were smitten.”—
II. CHRON. XX, 22.

This, the last verse of your Sunday School lesson to-day, is an account of a wonderful victory made by a singing army. All that they did was to sing praises to God and He helped them, by making their enemies fight among themselves instead of fighting against God's people.

Now to-day there is a singing army in the world, it is composed of the Sunday School children who in almost every land love to sing the sweet and stirring music of the cross, and I, for one, believe that your singing is one of the most important means which God is using to win victories for his church.

Singing has won many victories: In the time

of the old Puritans in England, the army of Cromwell used to sing sacred hymns, as they feared God, kept their powder dry, and brought terror to their foes.

In the war between the united powers and Russia, some years ago, it is said that the French army, after having made a valiant attack upon a Russian fort, was about ready to retreat and lose the day. Napoleon was telegraphed to; he telegraphed back immediately, "Let them sing the Marseillaise," the national hymn of France. They began to sing, courage returned, valor was revived, and the singing army took the fort.

Now I have called you a part of the Lord's singing army. You would make about two companies, counting in some of the older ones, who like to sing your songs as well as you. You have chosen me as your captain, and although I can't sing as well as many in the ranks, if I am captain, I must give you your orders. And I do not think I could find anything better than the words that Jehoshaphat, the king of the singing army of the text gave. You will recall them, the words of your golden text to-day: "Believe

in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper." You must then believe what you sing. Once in a while at negro shows, I am told, and in saloons, and from hand organs, there come the songs which the children's army is singing: "Hold the fort," "I need thee every hour," "Sweet bye and bye," etc., but I never heard that these songs won any victories over sin when used in such a way. But I have known some of Satan's army defeated, when those who believed what they sung, sang these precious hymns. There is a very wicked man in this town, mean in his life and hating God, who cannot keep back the tears when the children sing. Your songs can reach him, although he would not be moved by the best sermons or strongest books. So that you will want, if you belong to the great singing army, to believe as you sing.

But more than that, in the second place, you must sing as though you believed. What if Jehoshaphat's army, when he sent them out, had gone on to the field of battle singing a doleful song, or had sung one of the grand hymns, as though they were afraid lest their enemies

should hear them, do you think they would have won the victory? The enemy would have said the Lord's army was frightened and would have chased them from the field. But when they heard the Lord's army singing songs of victory, they fell into a panic and began to kill each other until they were all destroyed. And to-day there is nothing that makes the enemies of Jesus more troubled than to hear the childrens' army singing as though they believed what they sing.

And then, a third thing, I, as your captain, would tell you, and that is, God will bless those who sing. Don't you remember how Paul and Silas sang praises in the jail, so that all the prisoners heard them, and then all at once, in the middle of the night, God made an earthquake which shook the jail so much that the feet of the prisoners were loosed from the stocks? It may not be that your songs will do such things as that, but if your lives are sweet and pure and strong, as they cannot help being if you believe God, your songs will shake many stout hearts. God has made you to sing; he has helped good men to write words and music that you can

sing; you belong to the army which He is leading; the enemy are come out against us; they want to take you prisoners and teach you to hate God and the right; but you are not going to be taken; you are going to "hold the fort." You see the signal of your king. Your hands are not strong enough to do hard fighting, but you can sing. Sing, then, all of you. Believe what you sing, sing as though you believed, and God will bless your songs.

THE PRAYING KING.

II. CHRON., xxxii, 20-21.

A few Sundays ago, you remember, we had a sermon upon the singing army and its victories; to-day we have an account of a victory just as great because of a praying king.

Two years before the time of our text, the king, instead of praying to the Lord to help him fight against his enemy, paid a large amount of gold to save his city and kingdom. He thought that he was doing right, perhaps, and all the people were very much pleased at his course, and had a great celebration over it.

But there were a few very godly men who were very much grieved at what the king had done, and told him so. And Hezekiah was such a good man, and wanted so much to do right, that he made up his mind to do all he could to protect his kingdom, and to trust in the Lord to help him.

He did not have long to wait. The king of Nineveh, the same king who had been bought

off only two years before, started out to make war upon the rich country of Egypt, and made up his mind that he would make clean work as he went along. Egypt was about as far from Jerusalem as St. Louis is from here, and Nineveh, where the king Sennacherib lived, was about as far from Jerusalem as Chicago is from us. Of course there were no railroads, and the country was very hilly, and they marched quite slowly. There was a very strongly fortified town at Lacish, about as far from Jerusalem as Muscatine is from Davenport, a little farther, perhaps. And the first thing that Sennacherib did was to take that place and burn it, and skin the people alive. All the people in the country, when they heard what was going on at Lacish, left their homes and went into the city of king Hezekiah, Jerusalem, for it was built on a high hill and had strong walls all around it, which Hezekiah had been making stronger for some months, just as the people would come in from Durant and Dewitt and all the farms, to our city, if they thought it was safe and there was such a great army at Muscatine.

Then, too, Hezekiah had taken pains to turn

away from the city some brooks, so that if the army came to take it they would have no water for their horses or themselves. So Sennacherib only sent a few regiments to Jerusalem, with some high ranked officers, and they came to a place on the north side of the city and read a letter from Sennacherib, in which he told the people to give up at once; that it was foolish to trust in Hezekiah or in God; that they would have to be destroyed like a great many other people if they did not yield at once.

There were a great many people on the wall and on the roofs of the houses, and so still were they all that they could hear the letter when it was read by the generals before it was sent to the king. The messengers who received the letter were frightened almost to death, and they and the king tore their coats off of themselves and threw dust and ashes on their heads.

But the king knew that he could do no more, and did not dare to expect that the King of Egypt would come in time to save him, so he went into the great church, unfolded the letter before God, and prayed with all his might to the Lord. His prayer was heard, and the next

morning news came that a large part of Sennacherib's army had died in the night, and the few that were left had gone back home. This was a great deliverance, just as the Russians were saved from Napoleon and the French by a bitter cold night that froze 20,000 horses, and Protestant England was saved from Roman Catholic Spain by a storm at sea which sunk seventy Spanish ships; and Washington was saved from rebel gunboats by the monitor that sailed into the James River. And I have no doubt that at these later escapes prayer was offered as in the time of Hezekiah, when the army was destroyed, as you have all read in your school books,

“The Assyrians came down like the wolf on the fold,
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;
Like the leaves of the forest when summer is green,
The host with their banners at sunset were seen;
Like the leaves of the forest when autumn hath blown,
That host on the morrow lay withered and strown;
And the might of the gentile, unsmeared by the sword,
Hath melted like snow in the glance of the Lord.”

And what are we to learn from this story of to-day?

1st. Don't try to make bad people your friends by paying them.

2d. When you know that the wicked are trying with all their might to make you like themselves, pray to the Lord.

3d. Do all you can to make yourselves strong, and leave all the rest with Him who has promised to protect those who put their trust in Him.

HOW TO KEEP SUNDAY.

“The Sabbath was made for man.”—Mark ii. 27.

When Jesus used the word man in the text, He did not mean simply people who had beards and mustaches, deep voices, and wrinkles on their faces, He meant that the Sabbath was made for mankind, and hence, it was made for boys and girls, for surely they are human beings, and the Sabbath is one of the very best things that was ever made for you. The Lord always makes best things, and especially when he is making anything for those whom He loves, and He certainly loves the boys and girls.

Now, if God has made such a day for you, you certainly want to know how to make the most of it. And the first thing you will want to do is to expect to enjoy the Sabbath. I know a little girl not more than three years old, who begins, when it is Monday, to ask “when will Sunday come?” It is always nice to enjoy a good thing before-hand; if mother should tell you that you were going to have a new pair of boots,

or a new dress next week you would have a great deal of pleasure in thinking of it beforehand. And this would lead you to do another thing to get ready for Sunday to come. In your Sabbath School lesson to-day you learned how Nehemiah did, he shut the gates of the city Saturday night at sun-down. I can remember when Sunday used to commence at that time in our house, and we would as soon have thought of going without our meals on Saturday as to have failed of having a good, thorough bath on Saturday evening, to be all ready for Sunday. In the summer we would take it in the river with a good swim (the best bath of all the week), and in the winter the best way we could. Sunday is the day when we are to see more of God than any other day, and, although He cares more for clean hearts than anything else, He likes to have clean hands and faces to go with the clean hearts, and in fact to have us thoroughly clean. Then, too, another thing you will not forget to do, ask God to help you enjoy Sunday. This done, your sled or hoop and other playthings put one side, you can go to sleep and sleep as only children can, knowing nothing more until Sun-

day has come. Now, how will you use the day. You can begin it with thanking God for it; it tells you that Jesus rose on that day, and that if you love him you are to rise by and by and go to live with him. The birds in bird-singing time will have sung their thanks before you get up; by and by breakfast is ready, and boys and girls always enjoy Sunday morning breakfast, because it will be a little the best breakfast of the week. After breakfast and morning prayers, when father won't have to be in such a hurry to go to the store as he is some days, perhaps you can get him to tell you a good story that he has read out of the Bible or some other good book. Then you want to make sure that you have a good Sabbath School lesson, for boys and girls, like grown people, enjoy the most what they do well. Then, ready to go to church, you will be careful to be there in time, for it is a pity to be late when God has his people meet together. I told you last Sunday what you would do in church, and you all know, from going to school so much, how to behave in Sunday School. By this time you will be hungry "as a bear," you say, but I hope you won't be cross

and growl because you are hungry, for as soon as ever it can be, dinner will be ready, and a first-rate dinner it will be. When that is over, perhaps mother will want some help, or there will be something to do for the horse or the chickens, so that you can stir around; if it is pleasant you can stroll through the door yard, or if not, have a quiet walk about the house. After a little, you will want to study your Sabbath School lesson, for none of you need to go to another Sunday School in the afternoon, it is a very poor plan for you to do it. Then when you have read your Bible and your paper, which is made so interesting and beautiful at great expense, it will be about time to ask mother whether she has not something laid by for you to eat. Perhaps she will have brought in, before you ask it, something she knows you like very much. When you have eaten this I wouldn't wonder if she would sit down an hour with you, and have the very best time of all the week, for these mothers know how to make the boys and girls have the best time when they set out. She will have saved up some stories to tell you, and you can sing and pray together, and before

you get through, all of you will have to put your arms around mother's neck and say, "you are the nicest mother there ever was." Before you know it, it will be night; you then can have a quiet frolic, and Sunday will be gone, the day of all the week the best, for the Sabbath was made for boys and girls.

BEHAVIOR IN CHURCH.

“And they bowed their heads and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground.”—NEH., viii, 6.

It was a great meeting of which your text gives part of the account. There were children present during the meeting, which lasted from sunrise until noon. One man read the books of Moses, the first five books of the Old Testament, and while he read all the people stood up. Several men explained what was read, and while they made their remarks they and the people sat down; but during prayer, the man who prayed lifted both his hands toward the sky, and the people kneeled down, bending forward their faces until they touched the ground.

As you can see, their forms of worship were very different from ours, and we would think it quite strange could we see such a meeting.

But what would those people think of us, were they to see the way that some of us worship?

When the minister prays, some of the children put their hands to their eyes and try to pray with the minister, but there are some who spend the time looking around, and others, with their eyes shut, look as though they were praying, but their minds are wandering around. It must be very displeasing to God to have such ill-behaved people in his church, and I hope that the children here on Sabbath morning will not only bow their heads in prayer, but pray with the minister; and I can tell you one way to help you: it is to say amen to the prayers of the minister as he goes from one thing to another. I do that now when I hear prayer, not out loud, but to myself, and in this way I notice what the man who prays is praying for, and pray for the same myself. And I think that any of you who can understand what I am saying now, can follow in the prayer, for your pastor tries to use simple words and to pray for the things that we all need, and I wish that if any of you find that you can not understand what I pray for, that you would come and tell me, and then the next Sunday watch and see if you can not pray with me. And what do we mean when we

say amen? I was quite a large boy, as much as thirteen years old, before I found out. I thought it meant stop, because it came always at the end of the prayer; and one time when a man came to meeting, where my father was preaching, and kept saying, amen, amen, I thought that he was telling father to stop, and was very much displeased, but when I went home and found out that amen meant "so be it," I felt ashamed because I had been displeased. So when I pray that God will help us to be kind and true, if you say quietly, amen, God hears you say, "so may I be kind and true." And if you will notice, you will find that almost every Sunday I ask God for something for you, and as your fathers and mothers say amen for that, so can you say amen when I ask for something for them. And you will find that it will help you to bow your heads and close your eyes, and if you try to pray in this way, it will please God, who, I have no doubt, likes to have you act aright when in prayer, as much as your mother likes to have you take off your hat when you come into the parlor to speak to her; but it will not please God to have you bow your

head and close your eyes and think of your marbles or sled or top, any more than it will please mother to have her boy take off his hat and then give her a scolding.

But the minister reads the Bible as they did in the meeting of which your text speaks; and I am quite sure that the children, if they try, can understand what the minister reads; and if you watch closely, you will see that often the minister reads a chapter which has something to say about what has happened during the week, now about the snow, another time about the cold, then about the rain or the heat, and he does it because in this way we can all learn what God has to say about the things that happen all about us. Then another thing, almost always the second lesson from the Scriptures, has something from God about the sermon that is to follow. And in all the reading, I wish that you all could feel that it is God's book, and that to please Him you would try your best to hear and understand it, and if you have your Bibles with you, you could understand it better by looking over when your minister reads, and I will try

to remember and give you time to find the place if you will bring Bibles to church.

Another thing they had in that meeting, it was a kind of sermon, by which the people were helped to understand the Bible, and to do right. I am glad to know that many of the children have learned to listen to their sermon, and it does your minister good when he looks down from the pulpit and catches the eyes of children who are attending to the sermon, so that when they go home they can tell what they have heard. So you see, children, there is a right way of acting in meeting, and your parents, your minister and all, are pleased with all of you who try to behave right in God's house.

THE CONTRIBUTION BOX.

“They made a chest to bring into the Lord the collection, and all the people rejoiced and brought in and cast into the chest. — II. CHRON. xxiv, 8, 9, 10.

Children, I have seen men and women who looked as though they had rather meet a bear in the woods than to see a contribution box. They were very different indeed, from the people of your text, who rejoiced because a collection was going to be taken up. And as I want to have you all grow up glad to give, I want to talk to you to-day about contributions.

1. It takes money to carry on the Lord's work. God, if He had chosen, could have had the masons, and carpenters, and goldsmiths get together and repair the temple, and bring not only their tools, but all the material that was needed, but He commonly uses the regular way of doing things, and hence, after he had had Joash repair the temple, He led him to make a great collection to hire the men to do the work. It takes meeting houses and min-

isters and missionaries now-a-days to carry on God's work. Meeting houses can't be built without money, ministers are not angels who can get along without food during Sunday, and then fly up to heaven after preaching and stay until Sunday comes again, but they have to eat and sleep comfortably, so they must have money.

We do hear that the gospel is free, and I heard of a man who thanked the Lord for the free gospel, and said he had had religion for fifteen years and it had only cost him twenty-five cents. But I rather think his religion had not done him much good, for I would say, in the second place, that we prize what we give our money for. If you have worked hard on small wages and saved up enough to buy you a suit of clothes, you will think much more of them than if they were given you by father and mother. You will be much more careful of your doll or sled or skates, if you have learned how much they are worth by paying for them out of your own money. I used to notice at college, that the young men who had to earn their own way were generally better scholars than those whose fathers

paid all the bills. And I have usually noticed that those people enjoyed being Christians the most who have paid the most for it. But there is a third thing to notice, and that is that they do not always pay the most who give the most money. Jesus sat one day where he could see the people bring their collections to the chest, like the one of your text, He watched them all. The handsomely dressed people who put in bags of gold, the poorer people, pieces of silver, but there was a poor widow who came up so quietly, nobody noticed her but Jesus, and slipped in one-fourth of a cent. But it was all that she had, and Jesus said she gave more than all the rest put together. And I can remember when I was a boy how a poor woman in Mass., who had no money at all, brought a bag of chestnuts to help give Bibles to poor children, and a man bought the bag of chestnuts and then gave them up to be sold again, and so it went from hand to hand, until, if I remember rightly, it had brought in nearly a thousand dollars for the cause which the good woman loved. At other times rich men have learned how much some poor ones give and they have been led to do much more

than they otherwise would have done, so that if one gives all he can, it does not matter if it is very little. And this leads me to say a fourth thing, that like the people whom you read of in your text, you ought to rejoice when you have a chance to put money into the contribution. The most that you give will probably be in Sabbath School, to keep that going, and help the young man down in Fisk University whom you want to become a minister. Then the boys once a month go to the "wide awakes," and the girls to the "sunbeams," both of which are raising money to send the Word of God to the children who have no christian homes, Sabbath Schools or churches. If you have anything left, there will be a chance once in two months in church to give to some good object. And then if you have anything more, why all the rest of the Sundays the boxes are passed around to give the people a chance to pay for the wood and gas that make our church light and warm. So you see if it makes you happy to see the contribution box, you have a great many times to be happy in during the year. While if you feel miserable every time the box goes around, you must be

real unhappy in this church of ours, where we believe in paying all we can and think that giving is a part of true religion, when one has anything to give.

And more than all this, if you give all that, you give because you think it will please Jesus, and to help those who need help, you can feel that every cent, nickel, dime, or larger money is safely put into the bank of heaven, and when you go there will be the treasure waiting for you.

THE NEW YEAR'S GREETING.

Here I am! My father, who died last Tuesday at midnight, had, I am told, a little plain talk with you a week ago to-day, and now I want to talk with you, for, although I am only a little over four days old, I have seen enough of the world that I have come into, to have pretty clear ideas concerning some things that will interest you all. Men call me 1879, and say that no one was ever called by that name before, and that my parents and grandparents have done so much while they lived, that a great deal will be expected of me. It seems pretty hard to put such a great load on my young shoulders, and yet I am going to do my best, and I have come to you boys and girls on this, the first Sunday morning that I have seen, to ask if I cannot get your help for the year, for I want 1879 to be the very best year the world has ever seen.

Father told you that he treated you well while he had charge of you, and promised that I would do the best I could for you. I shall do it, but what that will be I cannot tell, for I do not know what Death, Disease, and Accident may be getting ready to do. One thing I know; that I can't live but a year; and I had rather live a year and do some good each one of its three hundred and sixty-five days, than to live three hundred and sixty-five years and be of no use to any body. And as to Disease and Accident, they cannot take away your choicest treasure, a pure, loving soul.

All I want is, that as long as we go on together that you should help me. I have two books which I write in every day. There is not much written in them yet. One I write with black ink, one with golden; every time I write with black ink it sends a pain through my heart; every time I use the golden ink I can hardly keep from singing.

The book that has to be written with the black ink, grows to be very ugly. Why, the one my father carried is perfectly horrible to look upon. The one that has the golden letters

shines more and more beautifully as its pages become full, and if I can only fill it during the year, it will come to be at last like one nugget of gold, such as I shall want to take with me when I go to stand beside all the other years—my ancestors who have gone. If the book filled with black is the largest how the world will despise and hate me when I am gone, and I shall be called mean, dreadful 1879.

Now, you can help me. I have to write in these books just what I see. I have no right to change it in the least. With the black ink I write the bad things that are done, with the golden the good. Yesterday, and the day before, and the two days before that, I put down something with golden ink, but more with black. Most of the black has been used in telling what wicked men and women have done; though some, I am sorry to say, is about boys and girls, and some of it about the very boys to whom I am talking. The golden pages that I have written are very beautiful, and many of your names are written there. Now, from my experience in the four days that I have lived I have come to the conclusion that if I want to

keep my golden book the larger of the two, I must have the help of the children; and so I have come to you to-day, and want very much to have you make up your minds that you will live in such a way all the time that we are together, that your name will be often found in the golden record, not in the record of black.

And to help you do it, I will make each of you three presents this morning. One is a beautiful roll, on which is written, "Love God with all your hearts, and all others treat as you would have them treat you." The other is a compass. Father called it a conscience, and if you are careful with it, it will always point you to the roll, that is to guide you in the way. The third is a cross. It is the most precious of all; for if you use it as you should, it will make you understand the roll, and keep the compass right.

You will remember that my whole name is 1879, A. D. The A. D. is the best part of it, for it brings to mind that precious One who died on the cross; and, as I should want to die to-day, if there were not an A. D. to my name, so I know that the only way in which you can

make my life worth anything, by filling the golden book, is to hold fast to the roll, the compass, and the cross.

SPRING SERMON FOR 1878.

"He changeth the times and the seasons."—DAN. ii, 21.

Every year that I have preached, I think, I have had a sermon upon Spring. But never before have I preached such a sermon in March. Last year I talked to you of the season "which unlocks the flowers to paint the laughing soil," quite late in April, and wondered when I had the sermon written, whether Sunday would be Spring-like enough to preach it in. But this year Spring has been with us weeks already; in fact, has not been far away during all the Winter months.

This Spring, therefore, being peculiar, has peculiar lessons to teach us.

First, we learn how great variety there is in God's way of doing things. Spring sometimes gets away behind-hand. The almanac tells us to look for it in March, and there will perhaps be more snow in that month than in all the Winter that had passed. April is cold, chilly, raw.

May morning tingles the fingers out after flowers. But about the second week in May, Spring begins to come; and how fast it comes: like a railroad train trying to make up lost time. On other years—like this Spring—it is ahead of its usual time of coming. It reminds us of some friends who send word that they are coming next week, and really come to-day. We are not quite ready to see them. The house is not in order; but we all like Spring so well that we are always very glad to see it come, even ahead of time, if it will only look out and not come so early as to catch cold and die on our hands.

Then, too, some Spring months are dry, others are wet. So that it is true that God has a great many ways of doing the same thing; and how glad I am that it is so; for this would be a dull world, did the thermometer stand just alike year after year, on each day as it goes by, or did we all look just alike, or did we all think just alike. God is wise and great, because He has so many ways of doing the same thing.

The second thought taught by this lesson, is that we cannot tell before-hand what is going to happen. Men had thought that they were getting

very wise; and on the first of the month were able to tell what the weather was to be all the weeks through it. But instead of the snow, ice and frost that they promised on a certain day, when the time came, we had all our windows open, men were working in the garden, and the boys were trying to find a shady place to play marbles in. They told us that the wind would be north and cold; and the north winds were warm. We can all learn this year that men know very little about the future, and must be much wiser than they are now, before they can tell beforehand what is going to happen; and hence it is not wise to trust too much in men, especially when they are telling what God is going to do, and God has not told them before-hand. A third lesson to learn is, God is kind. Three months ago there were thousands of poor families, who wondered how they could keep warm through the winter. It had been hard times, and the coal heap was small, and such folks dread March more than any other month. But every morning this month God has made a fire for them. The sun and the south, and unusually warm north winds are better than a load of coal at every poor man's door.

But perhaps you have heard people say, "Oh, yes! it is warm to-day, but we have got to pay for it bye 'and bye, when the frost will come and kill the silly buds and blossoms that came out because they thought it was spring."

Some of the papers have said this was like the spring of the year which was so bad that men called it "eighteen hundred and starve-to-death." But, children, you and I will try to trust God, and not be like those, who, because every thing is so nice to-day that they can't find any fault with it, grumble about what may possibly happen next week or next month. God is kind, and even if He should have to send a frost and kill the fruit, it won't be half as bad as we deserve to have happen. And then if the season should be pleasant all the way through, won't it do us good to tell the old croakers that they ought to be ashamed of themselves.

But I must save the other lessons of the seasons until next spring comes, and meanwhile we will remember how wise and good God is, and trust in Him instead of trusting in men who do not believe God.

SPRING SERMON, 1879.

"The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land."—
SOLOMON'S SONGS ii., 12.

I had been thinking that this year I would let you go without a spring sermon; but when I was riding on the top of a freight car through the country on Friday, and thinking of you, I made up my mind that I must tell you of the beautiful things I saw and heard. Your text tells a part of what I saw and heard. It says the flowers appear upon the earth; and as I rode along there seemed to be for miles beside the track a perfect flower garden of bright-colored flowers, and those of plainer colors, and the air was full of their fragrance.

Once in a while we would go rushing past a little grove of wild crab-apple, and the air was loaded with delightful perfume.

Toward evening the rest of the verse came true. The birds, that had been hiding away from the hot sun, came out and began their

evening hymns; the meadow-lark, singing to his mate; the robin, with his complaining note; the thrush, as merry as the wind, and the turtle dove, with its thoughtful eyes, almost too beautiful to sing.

But I saw and heard more than the man in the text; for I do not think even King Solomon ever put his eyes upon a more pleasing landscape than the one which passed before me like a panorama for miles and miles. The sky was cloudless, and as the sun toward night shone upon the fertile farms where the busy men were at work, and I could see the wheat springing out of the ground; and now and then a field of corn with its rows as straight as arrows; the large pasture filled with happy cattle, and the comfortable homes among the trees, I could not help exclaiming, over and over again, "How good God is to give us such a wonderful land! and to make it each spring so beautiful."

And then I came into town, and as I looked upon the trees that had put forth their leaves so rapidly in the two days after the rain, and the leaves of such a green as the painters can never find, and the pansy beds full of their little

faces looking up to the sky; Do you wonder that I made up my mind to talk to you this morning upon the spring days? And the first thing I would tell you to do is to keep your eyes and ears open.

On the car that I was riding in were two persons who did not see a flower or field, and one of them did not hear a bird sing. The one who could not see was a blind girl, and as she sat perfectly still, and the noisy cars rattled on, I could not help pitying the poor child, who must lose all the beautiful sights that I could see. The other was a man about thirty years of age, who drew out of his pocket a pipe more than two feet long, painted red like the smoke-stack of a steamboat, and then stuffed it full of the worst smelling tobacco, and began to puff, until he fairly drove me out of the car. But it was a good thing for me, for I should never have seen half as much inside as I could from the top of the train. But the smoker never saw a flower or heard a bird. All he could do was to sit with his back to the window and smoke. And I thought of what use is it to make such beautiful spring days when there are

so many who never have eyes or ears open to see the flowers or hear the birds? And I hope that all of you, with your bright eyes and good ears—and I do not know that there is a blind or deaf one among you—will make it a habit to notice all these things that the spring is so full of.

But more than that, I hope you will not only see and hear, but will look and listen for God. When you were coming to church this morning, if your mind was not taken up too much with your new clothes, or in noticing what others wore, or in thinking of the many things which ought to be forgotten on Sundays, you would have learned of God all the way to church. What man or company of men could have made the trees hang so full of leaves in a few short spring days? Only a few weeks ago, and there was a bundle of sticks and twigs, and now the green leaves, all full of nicely drawn lines, and carefully made with scalloped edges, some of one shade, others a little different, make the walk to church like a walk through a garden.

Then, too, the rain. We carried our pails of water to the thirsty flowers, and those, who

could, put the hose at work upon the lawn, but all the while the great fields, the wide prairies were crying for rain; the wheat was dying, the corn could not start to live, the grass was growing thin. God heard His people pray; the rain came. Did you not hear the trees and the grass clap their hands and laugh? It seems to me I could hear them sing. And I think that all of us who looked carefully and listened the same said we could see and hear our dear Father at work, making a beautiful world for His children to dwell in.

AN EASTER SERMON, 1878.

“But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept.—I. COR., xv, 20.

This is Easter Sunday. The day which all kinds of Christians all the world around celebrate as the one upon which Jesus Christ rose from the dead. Every Lord's day is an Easter, because it tells the same story, but there is one Lord's day in the spring time of the year which is set apart from all the Sundays to tell the story more plainly.

It is somewhat as if I should ask you whether you had no clothes to wear; you would not point to your every-day coat or dress, or bring me any of the common ones, but you would go to your trunk and closet and bring me your best suit and show it to me.

So Easter is simply the best Easter Sunday, and although it does not always come in the same month or on the same day of the month, that Jesus rose from the dead, 1845 years ago, it

tells us none the less plainly every time that it comes, Christ is risen.

But children like to look forward better than backward, and your text to-day is one that gives you a forward look, for it tells you because Christ rose on the first Easter Sunday, that by and by all of us who are Christ's will rise. It says that Christ was the first fruits. If you had planted a tree, and did not know exactly what it was, but this fall you should find on it one handsome, rosy-cheeked apple, next spring when it was full of blossoms, and in the summer when the little apples were forming, you would be looking forward to a tree full of handsome, rosy-cheeked apples. This is one meaning of first fruits that will help you to understand how Christ is our first fruits. He rose almost two thousand years ago, no one else has risen in the same way, but by and by, we all, if we love and are like Him, are going to rise.

But before that we all must sleep, or as people now-a-days say, we must die. Christ was dead. His body was in the grave from late Friday afternoon until very early the next Sunday morning, and was just as surely dead as

any of the bodies which you have seen in coffins. Some of you think it is a sad thing to die. Perhaps if the oak could think, it would feel badly to look all winter as though it was dead, or the grass, or the little flowers, but since Jesus died and rose again, it is not a sad thing to die. If the oak tree were never going to have any leaves when it has lost them in the fall, or the fields were never going to be green again, it would be sad to see them so dead and bare, but for many a day we have been watching the buds growing larger and larger on the trees, and the leaves are coming out too and the prairies are already covered with green grass, and if you look carefully, you can find here and there a blossom in the same spot where there was a cluster of wild flowers last year.

So we will all be glad that, because there is an Easter, it need never be said of any of us that we are dead, but that we are asleep.

But before we go to sleep or die, we have a great deal about us and in us that is neither good or nice. This will not be the case when we come to rise from the dead. I can not tell you what we shall be then, but one thing I know,

we shall be like Jesus. I do not mean that we shall look just like Him, and so all look alike, but we shall all be perfect and complete.

When this time comes the best Easter of all will have come.

In a moment, in a twinkling of an eye, God's trumpet will sound and we shall be changed.

Our bodies may be buried on the land or lie under the sea. Some of you as you grow up may go to preach in China, or Africa, or Japan, and lie down there, falling asleep in Jesus. Some of you may have your bodies in Oakdale, father, mother and all the children side by side. But it makes no difference where our bodies fall asleep, nor in what kind of a casket or coffin they are placed, when the trumpet sounds on the last Easter the world is to see, we shall one and all stand in the numberless company as much more beautiful than we are now, as the apple blossom or the full grown peach is more beautiful than the little, plain looking buds we saw on the trees last January.

And because this is the case we all should be very careful of the bodies which are to rise. Sometimes in a cold winter or a late spring the

frost goes through all the orchards and kills all the buds, and then when spring comes and the grass and leaves begin to grow green there is no blossom, the trees have no such Easter as they have this year.

So I have seen boys, girls, men and women who have let sin ruin them, as frost does the buds, and when the great Easter shall come the Bible says they shall rise to shame and contempt.

God wants you to be such boys and girls as will rise at last in the beauty of His Son, and on this beautiful Easter morning I hope that each one of you will let Jesus shape your lives so that when He calls you may be like Him.

EASTER SERMON 1879.

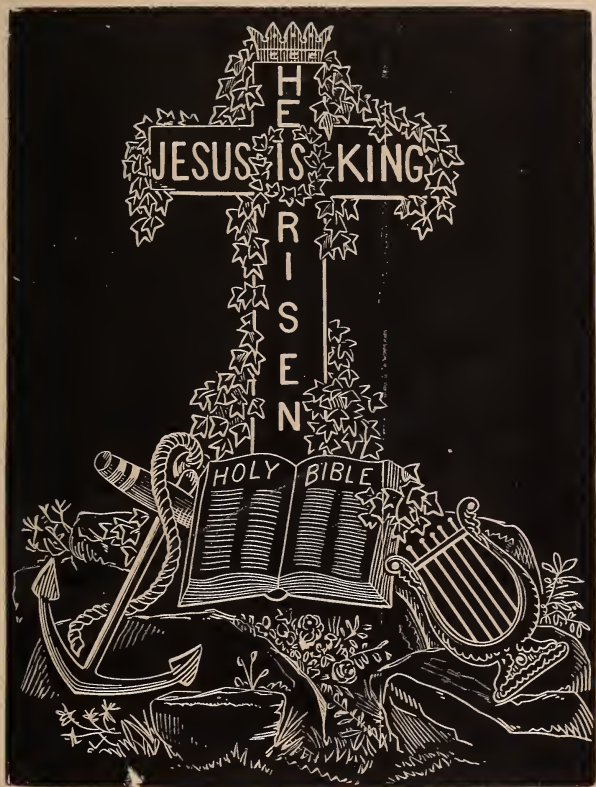
“But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept.”—I. COR., xv, 20.

When an artist has spent time and care upon a painting and has it done, usually he is glad to find a frame in which to place it and thus display its beauty. The frame, although costly, is worth nothing to such a man unless he uses it.

In some such way I look upon keeping Easter. It is a very beautiful custom, but is worth nothing unless it serves to call our attention to the great truth that Jesus Christ rose from the dead, and that other truth, that because He rose we shall rise also.

I want to talk to you about this resurrection, one of the most blessed truths in all the Bible.

There are many men now-a-days, who say that it is foolish to believe that our bodies are raised from the dead. They say that the bodies are put into a coffin, buried in the ground, and before many months or years there is nothing more left of them; that they have all gone



back to earth, and that they cannot be raised. On the other hand, the Bible says they can and will be raised; and I believe the Bible; and I want to have you believe it too, and that you may, let me tell you a few things.

You need not believe that at the last great day when the dead rise, that exactly the same body is to come out of the grave that is buried there. We are to be changed, and you all know that there can be very great changes in a person and he still be the same. A little boy was baptized in church to-day; did you see his wee fingers and hands, his fair cheeks and hair; now it would not be a strange thing if forty years from to-day there should be a tall man with a fine head, dark hair and beard, with a clear voice, and using his hands with graceful gestures, who should be preaching in this pulpit, and he could say to those who heard him, forty years ago to-day my father and mother brought me here to be baptized. He would speak the truth, although there was not one particle of the little baby's body in his own body. There is some way, God only knows what, by which the child's body, a part of which dies every day,

is changed to a man or woman's body; so the spiritual body that we are to have in heaven is connected with the bodies we have here and that we lay in the grave.

But the spiritual body is to be vastly more beautiful than the one we have now. A little child came to its mother one day, and told her to look out of the window and see the ugly worm or grub on the branch of a tree near by, and as she told her she shuddered, so very ugly did the creature look. The mother did as her daughter asked her, but she would not do as her little girl wished her to, kill it, and she bade her let the creature all alone. The little girl obeyed and went about her plays, and tried to forget the ugly, crawling thing that she had seen. Not many days after, the same little girl came running up-stairs crying, "mother! mother! do come down stairs, quick or it will be gone; there is the most beautiful creature I ever saw, near the window; it has wings of such a nice color, and it flew against the window to have me let it in—come and open the window and let me take the dear thing in my hand." The mother hurried down stairs as her little girl wished and gave

her the beautiful butterfly, but as she did it she said, "that is the grub or worm that you wanted me to kill only a few days ago. The little girl was half a mind to let the beautiful insect drop when she heard this, and had she not known that her mother always told the truth, she would not have believed her; but in after years she would have found that when she got old enough to know what is true, that her mother was right. Now, I need not tell you that the spiritual body, which we are to have, is to be as much more beautiful than the one put into the coffin, as the butterfly is more beautiful than the grub. You and I have not gotten minds strong or clear enough to imagine how beautiful a body God can and will make for our souls out of the bodies which we now have,

Some one asked Paul once, how all this that I have been talking about could be? He got almost out of patience with the man and said, Can't you believe this? It is as if you would not believe that there could be a spear of wheat grow when you had put a kernel in the ground, because you cannot tell how it grows; and yet you know that it does grow, and, although the

kernel decays in the ground, what a beautiful, tall stalk grows up, and there are fifty round, hard grains of wheat in its tufted head. So, says Paul, at the last day God will, out of and in place of the weak, weary bodies that we now have, give us beautiful bodies to live in heaven with Him forever and ever.

There is only one thing that we need see to, and we shall have these beautiful heavenly bodies: We must be the friends of that Jesus who rose from the dead on the first Easter Sunday, and because He rose all His friends are to rise on the last Easter, the day when God will take His loved ones home.

A THANKSGIVING SERMON.

"It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord."—Ps. xcii. 1.

During this week we are to have a Thanksgiving Day all over the land. It is only sixteen years that we have had such a National Thanksgiving. Before that time each Governor of each State, and of only a part of the States at that, used to appoint such a day.

The New England States think more of the day than any other. Massachusetts has had Thanksgiving for more than two hundred and fifty years. The first one that I ever heard of they had in a town called Plymouth, in Mass.; and there were Indians and white men who kept it together. The Indians brought some wild game, deer and the like, the white people furnished corn and beans for the dinner.

The first Thanksgivings that I remember were about thirty years ago. We used to think about it and hear about it long before it came; if anybody wanted to tell the time when he

thought of doing anything, he would say it was so many weeks or days before or after Thanksgiving. The winter school always began "the Monday after Thanksgiving." So you see, it was a very great day in the year, and if you had been there you would have found that it made a deal of work also. The mother of the family used to begin to get her mince-meat chopped a week beforehand. She had a brick oven in the chimney, into which the boys would throw several arms full of pine wood, and when they were burned the coals were raked out, the oven swept, then ten or twelve pies were put in, the door was shut, and in a little while they were baked nicer than you can think. Then every body who could, would have a turkey, although it might be the only one that they would have in all the year; for turkeys are not as plenty in New England as on our prairies.

It did seem as though Thanksgiving would never come. But at last it came, and the family sat down to breakfast. The father's blessing was a little longer than common, for it was an uncommon breakfast. It was all made up of

pie, chicken pie, mince pie, apple, squash, custard, and other kinds of pie; and the children could have all the kinds they wanted.

At half-past ten came meeting. The sermon was always long, but the older people seemed to think it good; the singing was very loud and lively, and the prayers were full of thanks and went around the world. After awhile meeting would be over, and then came the great dinner of all the year, and the only trouble was that the children would find that they had eaten enough too soon.

After dinner came plays in the neighborhood among the children; when it was dark the family came together, and that evening, if on no other evening of the year, the father and mother would play with the children, blind-man's buff and other games. The day after came a candy-pull, and Thanksgiving was over. So you can see, boys and girls, we children were very glad to have Thanksgiving come around, and to hear on the Sunday before the minister read a long paper called the Proclamation, all of which that I can remember was the name of the Governor

who signed it, and the last words, "God save the Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Now what was the use of all this? I will tell you.

1. It made us love God more. It was a good way to teach us to remember that God gives us all the good things which we have; we stopped to think of it and spoke of it to one another, and we found it a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord.

2. It made us love our State; we always knew that we had a Governor when Thanksgiving came, and that he wanted all the people to be happy, and we felt more proud of Massachusetts than most boys now-a-days do of the State they live in.

3. It made us love home more. It was the brightest day of all the year in our homes, and we were taught to make other homes happy by sending to them dainties that they could not buy. Oh! how we did love the old home and all who lived in it; and I want you to have just such a Thanksgiving next Thursday, so that you may love more your God, your State and your homes.

A FOREFATHERS' SERMON.

Ps. xxii, 4.

Usually on the Sunday before Christmas, I preach to you boys and girls a Christmas sermon, not because I think Christ was born on the 25th of Dec., but because nearly all the Christians of the world have come to celebrate that day as Christmas.

But there is another birth-day to celebrate as well as Christ's birth-day, this week, and that birth-day is to-day, the birth-day of America, the day when the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth.

The little ship called the May-Flower, with 102 passengers on board had sailed across the stormy Atlantic. They came after sixty-four days on the ocean to a harbor on the 22d of Nov., that was Saturday. Sunday they kept, and Monday sent out a party of men to find what kind of a country they had come to. It took nearly a month to find the right place to land. It was very cold; some of the time the water froze on their clothes and made them like coats of iron;

the mast of the exploring boat was blown away. On a Friday they found Plymouth harbor; the next day they dried their clothes and repaired the breaks in their boat. Sunday they kept holy unto the Lord. Monday they sounded the harbor, went on shore, marched some ways inland, found some corn-fields and some small running brooks, and made up their minds that they had come to the land which they had sought. So they came to the ship again with the good news to the rest of the people, and they were all glad. This was 259 years ago. Now as you are all Congregational children, and the Congregational people are very proud of the little band of men and women and children who landed on Plymouth Rock, I wanted to have you celebrate together the birth-day of our land.

Why do I call the landing of the Pilgrims the birth-day of America? It is because the men who came to our country at that time have done more than any others to make America what it is. As they were coming over the ocean, they met together in the cabin of the ship and chose a governor. This was the little acorn from which the great tree, our United States has sprung.

There are several reasons why I love to call these men to mind. One is because the most of the men were Christians, and had come to America that they might serve Christ better than they could have served Him in the Old World. And I believe that Jesus will be glad to have us remember such men on the Sunday that we usually remember His birth-day. A second reason is because the men were brave. I like to see any one who dares to do what is right whatever it costs. These men made up their minds that a certain thing was right, and there were no king's swords, no ocean's waves, no fierce storms that could turn them to the right hand or the left.

A third reason is because they have done so much for us all. If there had been a different class of men come and started this country, we should not have had a land full of churches, free schools and the Bible. Most of you know what a land Mexico is; how much less they enjoy there than we do here; how the children grow up without knowing how to read and write, There are no Sunday-schools, there are very few

Bibles, then they have few railroads or telegraphs or any other of the wonderful things that the United States is full of, and we should probably have been in the same condition had our country fallen into such hands at first as Mexico did, instead of having been settled by our Pilgrim Fathers. Therefore, boys and girls, on this cold winter day, call to mind the little company of true, brave, Christian men, women and children who landed on Plymouth Rock; and as we sing Christmas hymns to our Lord, we will sing one hymn about them, and try to be true pilgrims ourselves, brave, honest, ready to suffer for Christ, our King and Savior.

A CHRISTMAS SERMON,

“The birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise.”—MATT. i, 18.

For a Christmas sermon this year, I want to give you an account of the first Christmas. We all this week are to celebrate, the birth-day of Jesus, and hence it is well to know what happened on the day that he was born.

The mother of Jesus, on the day before Christmas, had come, with her husband, to a little town called Bethlehem, where you will remember long before Ruth had gleaned in the field, and where David had watched his flock of sheep.

It was late when Joseph and Mary came to the little village, and when they went to the public house to find a place to stay all night it was filled; there was no room for them. What were they to do? Near the house, in the hill-side, was a cave, used as a stable for the horses and cattle. They went into this place for the night, and before morning the little baby, Jesus, came.

It is just as though some dark evening a man and woman should come to your house when every room was full, and therefore should go to the barn, and when you should go in the morning to see how they slept you should find there had a little baby come, and see the wee thing wrapped in a shawl, perhaps crying with the cold.

How different from the way the little baby came to your pleasant home a little while ago, when the first you knew father said you had a little brother or sister, and when you crept softly in to see it you found a kind nurse holding the little treasure in her arms, and it was as warm as warm could be, with its nice soft clothes and clean blanket.

But during that night while Jesus was born, about a mile from the public house, there were some men attending sheep. They kept awake for fear the wolves would come and carry away their lambs; when all at once they heard a sound in the sky, and looking up, it seemed as light as day. An angel appeared before them. They were afraid, terribly frightened. But the angel said, "Fear not. It is good news I bring, joy-

ful news for all the world, for in the little town near by the Savior is just born. You can see Him if you will, in the manger of the cave near by the inn, with the little blanket wrapped about Him." And then, quick as thought, the angel was surrounded by a host, and they sang with one voice, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, good will toward men.

The angels then departed as quietly and as quickly as they had come, and the shepherds left their flocks to go to the village and see the new-born child. They did not have a long, and it was a beautiful walk along the beautiful terraces that surrounded the town. They found the manger, the mother, and the child, and praised God for at last sending His only begotten Son into the world.

Not long after, perhaps not that night, but as a part of the first Christmas, came some men from a far-off land, wise men they were called, and they had been long on the way, following a star that directed them to the same cave where Jesus was born. They stayed a little while, and leaving some costly presents for the little one, went back to their distant home.

This is all that has been told us of the first Christmas, and it seems like a little thing beside the great celebration which is to be held this week all the world around. Just as the little lake seems small from which comes the grand river which flows past our city. And yet it was the greatest Christmas the world ever saw, and if there had not been such a first Christmas there never would have been the happy hours of the coming week.

And Tuesday, when you are as happy as ever you can be, there are two things which I hope you will remember. One all about the first Christmas, what a loving, kind thing it was to have Jesus born your Savior; the other, that like the wise men, yours will be the best Christmas if you can give Jesus some gifts. You can not find Him in a manger, nor give Him gold, frankincense and myrrh, but He has said that if you give any thing to those who need, because you love Him, that it is the same as giving something to Him. He it was who said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

TEMPERANCE.

“Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging; and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.”—Prov. xx, 1.

In my journeys I came to a beautiful land filled with pleasant homes. The fields were covered with grain, the brooks ran merrily through it, and I said to myself, how happy are the people who dwell in such a land.

I had not been long there before I learned that in the midst of the country was a strong castle in which lived a giant, cruel and wicked. He was very old, but he never was more strong than he is to-day, and although nearly every one wishes him dead, I cannot see why he may not live many years to come.

He is very rich; you could not count the money that he has, or number the houses that he owns. His castle is stronger than iron and stone, and from its towers can be seen all the vast possessions of the giant.

One cannot be long in this country without hearing much of the awful deeds of the cruel

monster. He sends out year by year and takes for his own use the product of many of the richest fields. Men sow barley, and the giant takes it nearly all. He puts his hand also on the rye and corn, and takes some of the apples, and many grapes. He does indeed give money sometimes for all these things, but he manages to get it out of the people who dwell there, so that for every dollar he pays them he gets twenty from them.

I could not imagine what the giant could do with all this corn and barley, and the grapes, until I learned that he had a way of so changing them that they became the means which he used to destroy the people of the land, to get them to his castle and grounds, and devour them. One day while I was there, I looked into one of the dungeons of the castle. In it I saw a poor wretch. His eyes were blood-shot, his face was scarred, his clothes were ragged and filthy, his hands shook as though he had the palsy. He told me his story.

I was born, said he, in a pleasant valley many miles from this castle. My father was proud of me, and my mother loved me, and being an

only son I was to be their heir, and I could have had the best farm in all the region where we lived. All went well with us until I was about sixteen years old, when one day I came to spend a few hours on the ground where this castle stands. I knew there was a giant living here, but I thought there was little risk of meeting him, and although he is very cruel, his grounds are as beautiful as money can make them. I did not let father and mother know where I went, and I had such a happy time that I went again. At length my parents found me out. My father commanded, my mother begged, that I should never go again upon the grounds. I despised the commands and tears, for I had come to think more of the good times on the giant's grounds than of home. It took money to make so many visits, and when I had spent all of my own, I began to spend that which belonged to father and mother. They became poor, the farm had to be sold, father died a pauper, mother had gone before with a broken heart. I had no power to keep out of the hands of the giant, and for years he has had me in this dungeon. He abuses me every day of my life. I wish I

was dead. I dare not die; I cannot live; oh, what! what shall I do? And the poor man looked the picture of wretchedness and despair. After a few moments I asked him whether there were many prisoners in the castle. Yes, oh yes, it is full of them. There are ten thousand cells, and every cell has its victim, and there is not a day in all the year when the giant does not find time to come around and do us all the harm he can; and when we die, if report is true, we are given over to a worse foe, who is to keep us forever in torment.

It would make your heart sick to have me tell you of the woes of men shut up in this awful castle. Some of them are made insane; some become murderers; many become suicides; not a few are idiots. Don't stay here with me any longer, said he, but return to the beautiful land where I used to live, and tell the boys and girls never, never, to go for a day into any of the grounds of the giant, Strong Drink, for although they may think it joyous at first, it will not be long before too late they will find out, as alas, I have done, that "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise."

A HOME MISSIONARY SERMON.

MATT. xxv, 40.

Children, you sometimes think perhaps, that because your sermon is short and made up of easy words, that it cannot take your minister much time to get it ready. You are mistaken, for often your little sermon costs me more time and thought than the general sermon; for it is not easy always to find just the truth which you will be interested in or will help you.

This week I kept putting off writing you a sermon until last night. I was going to preach on Home Missions to the church, and I had preached to you about that only three weeks ago. The Sunday-school lesson did not give me any subject for you. I thought of every thing, and at last sat down and read the "Home Missionary" for December.

After I had read it all through, I let it fall into my lap, and sat looking into the fire, and had this dream with my eyes open.

I seemed to myself to be a missionary in western Iowa. I was about thirty-eight years old; had two girls and two boys, the oldest ten years, and the youngest a baby. We lived in a little house of two rooms. The mother of the children had poor health, for there was a great deal of ague in the place where we lived, and she had worked too hard taking care of the children and of the house, for I had to be away a great deal of the time, as I had to preach in five different places in four different counties, and had to ride more than a hundred miles a week to be at my preaching places, and as much more to see the sick and attend funerals and do the other visiting that the people needed. But on the day of which I am writing, I was at home. My wife needed medicine. I had not a cent in my pocket-book, and had not had for weeks. My people had no money, and all that they could do was to pay me in corn, pork and potatoes, just enough for the family. All the *money* that I had, was from the Home Missionary Society in New York, and they agreed to send me once in three months just enough money to get the few things which we must have to live.

But it had been six months since I had had anything from New York, and I was ashamed to go down town because I could not pay the bookstore keeper for Nellie's slate, and the shoemaker for mending my boots, and the tailor for making over my coat, and worst of all, the druggist for the medicine. I had told them so many times that I would let them have the money, and they had looked lately as though they did not believe me, and thought that I did not mean to pay them, and they cannot be blamed, for they do not know me, for I have not been preaching for them more than twelve months, and yet there is wife, twenty-five cents worth of medicine would, I think, cure her. "Come Charley, can't you run over to the post-office. I see the mail has come in. Perhaps there will be a little money from the Society." "Why, papa, I have been every day for a month, and it has not come." "Well, go once more. If you go, the shoemaker and the druggist can't look cross at you, they hardly know you." The little boy went and came back without a letter, but he brought with him a copy of the Missionary Magazine for Dec., in which it was stated

that the Missionary Society is \$30,000 behind, and the people in the churches are so slow in sending the money for the missionaries, that no one can tell when the missionaries will be paid. That means me. Well, one thing I can do, I said here is a watch that mother gave me when she died. I can take that to the druggist and tell him to take it and let me have some medicine. It may be that he will keep it and let me buy it back again when my money comes from the Society, of course I shall have to pay him well for keeping it for me.

So I went to the druggist, he said he would call the watch worth ten dollars, Mother paid fifty for it, and let me have the medicine. I owed him five dollars already. He will keep it three weeks, and then I can have it for the money; he is very kind. I only hope the money will come. Children, don't you think I felt glad when I stopped dreaming and said that I was your minister instead of being a missionary in such trouble. I did, but then I said to myself, that dream is the real life of many men, better men, abler men than I am, and I made up my mind that I would give to-day all I could, and

get my people to give all they could, and ask the children to help, that we may send money to be paid to the Home Missionaries.

And the king shall answer and say unto all of us who give all we ought to-day: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

A FOREIGN MISSIONARY SERMON.

“Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run after thee.”—ISAIAH lv. 5.

This is a foreign missionary text, and I am going to preach to the boys and girls, many of whom belong to mission societies, a sermon that will show how glad we ought to be that there are promises like our text in the Bible, and men and women who are willing to be missionaries.

Not a great many hundred years ago the men and women who were our ancestors lived in Great Britain, for most of us are Anglo-Saxons, as you will sometime learn. They were heathen; their greatest god was the god of war. His name was Woden, for him the fourth day of the week was named Wednesday. His wife's name was Fria—for her the sixth day is called Friday. Their bravest, strongest son was called Thor, and from him Thursday had its name. The people then were very cruel, and used to kill men, women, and boys to please these idol gods; and were you to go to England you could

find the ruins of one of the great temples where boys and girls were killed. When meetings were held the people behaved dreadfully. It would not do to tell you what wicked things were then said and done.

Over in Ireland about that time a captive boy was growing up, whom his parents called Patricius—you have heard him called St. Patrick—who was able, with the help of God, to lead all Ireland to become Christians. After he died one of his followers went to Scotland as a missionary, and a great many people of that country and of England became Christians.

But there was at that time a bad Pope at Rome, who did not like the work done in Great Britain, and broke it up, and the land before long became heathen again. After a while there came a good Pope by the name of Gregory; he saw some captives for sale in the market at Rome. They were so beautiful that he called them angels, which sounds some like the way they pronounced English. He made up his mind to send missionaries to the country from which the captives came. The missionaries dreaded to go, but went, and were very success-

ful. They baptized ten thousand on one Christmas day. The king and queen became Christians.

Of course at first the religion which the people had was very rude. We would think that they were pretty near heathens, although they were called Christian. But as time went on and changes took place, the Christian religion got a stronger and stronger hold upon the people, until now the land is full of churches, and schools, and colleges, and the people as a whole worship God, who tells us to love and help one another.

After the events of which I have told you had happened, many of the people of England came, as you know, to the United States, and here built up a Christian country. The very first thing that most of them did was to build a church and a school house, and so we have a Christian country. Just try to think how different it would have been in America had the heathen from China and India come here instead of the Christians from Europe, and yet there are some men, I am glad to say they are not as many as they used to be, who say it is not worth

while to try to send missionaries to the heathens. Let me answer them by telling you a fable that perhaps some of you have heard.

A long time ago the whole sea was full of fish, and everywhere the large fish would chase and eat up the little ones, the strong would trouble the weak, and often to please some of the worst fishes the very best would be caught and killed. At length in a beautiful bay there came from the sky a new fish, with a different life from all the fish of the sea, and he told the other fishes how much brighter, and better, and happier life would be, could all the fish help one another and do good. The fishes in the bay heard what he said, and began to live as he bade them, and a prosperous life it was. But all the while the rest of the sea was full of cruel life and wretched, and although there were many of the happy fish of the bay who were ready to take their lives in their hands and go into the wide sea and teach the cruel fish to become kind, there were not a few in the happy bay who said it was a waste and shame to do any such thing, and so they simply got all the good they could out of their life in the happy

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bay, and let the whole sea remain in ruin and shame, until, for such a selfish crime, God sent leanness upon them, and the happy bay became as selfish and cruel as the wide sea itself.

TRUST AND FEAR.

"Kiss the Son lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him."—PSALM, ii, 12.

This, the last verse of your Sunday-school lesson to-day, sums up all the duties of the lesson. It tells you two things, to fear God and to trust Him.

I have thought that perhaps some of you may have wondered how any one could fear and trust the same person, and I want to show you that we trust because we fear.

If we were living in a large city where there were a great many bad men who needed to be watched, caught, if they did wrong, and punished, we would all want a mayor of whom the bad people would be afraid, and the more afraid they were of him, the more would the city trust him. If we could know that he would call out the soldiers and shoot the men who stole or murdered, we could feel very safe.

This is true in almost everything. If I

should make up my mind to go to Chicago tomorrow, and go down to the depot to take the train, I should expect to find a locomotive or engine that I would be afraid of. I should trust myself to it, and expect to go to Chicago that afternoon; but if I should say when I go to the depot, "I will not go on the cars until they put on an engine that would not hurt any body if it run over them or run against them;" it would be of no use to trust such an engine. I would never get to Chicago if I did.

If I should climb up into the bell tower and look over the railing, and you should ask me to get up on the railing and jump off on the sidewalk, I would tell you that I was afraid. "Afraid of what?" you would say. I would fear that the power of gravitation, as men call it, would draw me down so fast that when I came to the ground it would kill me; and yet I would never have dared to climb into the tower if it had not been for the power of gravitation. It is because we trust in gravitation that we build our houses, and climb where it is high. If it were not for this power we would be afraid to get on top of a hill, lest we should go up from

it and never come back to the earth again. We trust the power of gravitation, although we fear it.

So you see that the man who wrote this psalm is asking you to do something that we all do every day when he tells us to trust what we fear.

And when you think of it you will learn that it is because we are afraid of God that we trust Him.

If God was like a man, weak and unable to direct the world, we should live in fear all the time; we could not trust Him at all. We would not dare to go on board a ship, for we would not know but the wind would be stronger than God, or the waves would be more powerful than He; but when we learn that the wind and the waves are in His power, that they are afraid of Him, then, though we are afraid of them, and hence might be more afraid of Him, we trust Him.

But there is another reason why we should fear God. It is because He is good. Take two boys who go to school. One of them has a good father, the other has a father who is very

bad. He will tell lies and swear and steal. Which of the boys will be afraid of his father if he is asked to play truant or cheat his playmate, or do any other bad thing? It will not be the bad man's boy, for that father would not care what his boy did, no matter how bad it might be. It would be the good man's son; for he would know that if his father could find out what he had done he would punish him very severely. And yet, which of the boys would trust his father? It would not be the son of the bad man, for he would never know what his father might do or say; but it would be the son of the good man, for he would know that his father always would do right.

Now, there is nothing in the world that any of us should be so thoroughly afraid of as God, if we do wrong. He hates the wrong and will punish it, and no one can punish so hard as He; but at the same time he loves the right, and will reward it, just as much as He hates and will punish the wrong. So that if you and I want to find any body whom we can trust more fully than any or all else, it is He whom we also fear the most, because He is both strong and good.

And now I think you can understand better than you have before, what your lesson means when it says, "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him."

VICTORY OVER DEATH.

“Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory.”—I. COR. xv, 57.

You boys and girls are too young to remember when the news came that General Grant had taken Vicksburg and General Meade had conquered the rebels at Gettysburg, sixteen years ago this month of July. And how did the people of the North behave when they heard this great news? Flags were thrown to the breeze, canons were fired; all who loved their country and believed in God said, “Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory.”

But at that time there were some good people who loved the flag, who could not help weeping most bitterly, although they were glad to have the people rejoice over the victory, for they had sons who fell on the field of battle to gain the victory.

It is true of every victory that it costs much to gain it, and those who suffer most must have

sadness with their joy. The victory of which the text speaks is like all others in this. It is Christ's victory over death, and it cost our Lord's life.

But there is one very strange thing, that many of the friends of Jesus, although they know that Jesus has gained the victory, act as though He had been conquered.

When a good man or woman dies, or a Christian boy or girl, it is a victory for Jesus. Death may have snatched away their bodies for a while, but the Christian is unhurt, is taken to be with Jesus, and when he wants his body again all that he cares to have of it is returned. It is a complete victory.

But for all this, there are many of us who act as though death had gained the victory, and we walk about as though our friends were dead. Jesus says they are asleep, and certainly we ought to believe Him. And while of course it is very hard to part with those who leave us, and we cannot help feeling badly, we ought to try to believe that they are alive and victors.

I have been reading about the way in which the Christians who lived 1,600 years ago felt and acted when their friends died, and I hope God will help us to feel as they did. They did not say anything about the cruel grave and the dreadful tomb, but they called the places where they buried people cemeteries, and when you come to study Greek you will learn that cemetery means a sleeping place.

One of the places where they put the dead bodies was in the Catacombs, an underground city beneath the city of Rome. There were streets, passages, and alleys, the length of which added together is over nine hundred miles, and I suppose more than five millions of people were buried there. Some of these were heathen, many of them Christians, and you can tell many of the Christian burial places by the sign of victory on the slab at the grave.

If ever you go to Rome you can go down into these catacombs, and see the names of these Christians and the signs of victory. You would have a torch in your hand, and after your eyes had become used to the dim light you can see places just large enough to hold a dead

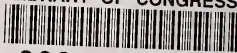
body cut in the soft rock, one above the other like sleeping berths in a ship, or as a man has said, like shelves of a library where Death has laid his works.

Right beside the slab is a little bottle or vase to hold the tears which friends could not help shedding, while on the slabs you can read such words as these: "Marius, youthful soldier, who lived long enough, for he gave his life and his blood for Christ. In peace." And another: "Alexander is not dead, but lives beyond the stars, and his body rests in this tomb." And another: "Here sleeps Gregorius, friend to all, and enemy to no man." In one place that was opened a few years ago was found the remains of a little girl, and by her side the doll she used to play with when she was alive. On some slabs are pictures of a palm branch. Those who were buried there were martyrs, and because they had died for Jesus this sign of victory was put on their burial place. On others there is a picture of a dove on the cross, which may mean that when there is a cross of pain the dove of comfort comes. But the one I want you to remember the longest is a picture of the

good Shepherd, carrying a lamb on his shoulders, while two other lambs walk by his side. For that tells in a picture the teaching of your text, and of that beautiful Psalm, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me, Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me."



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